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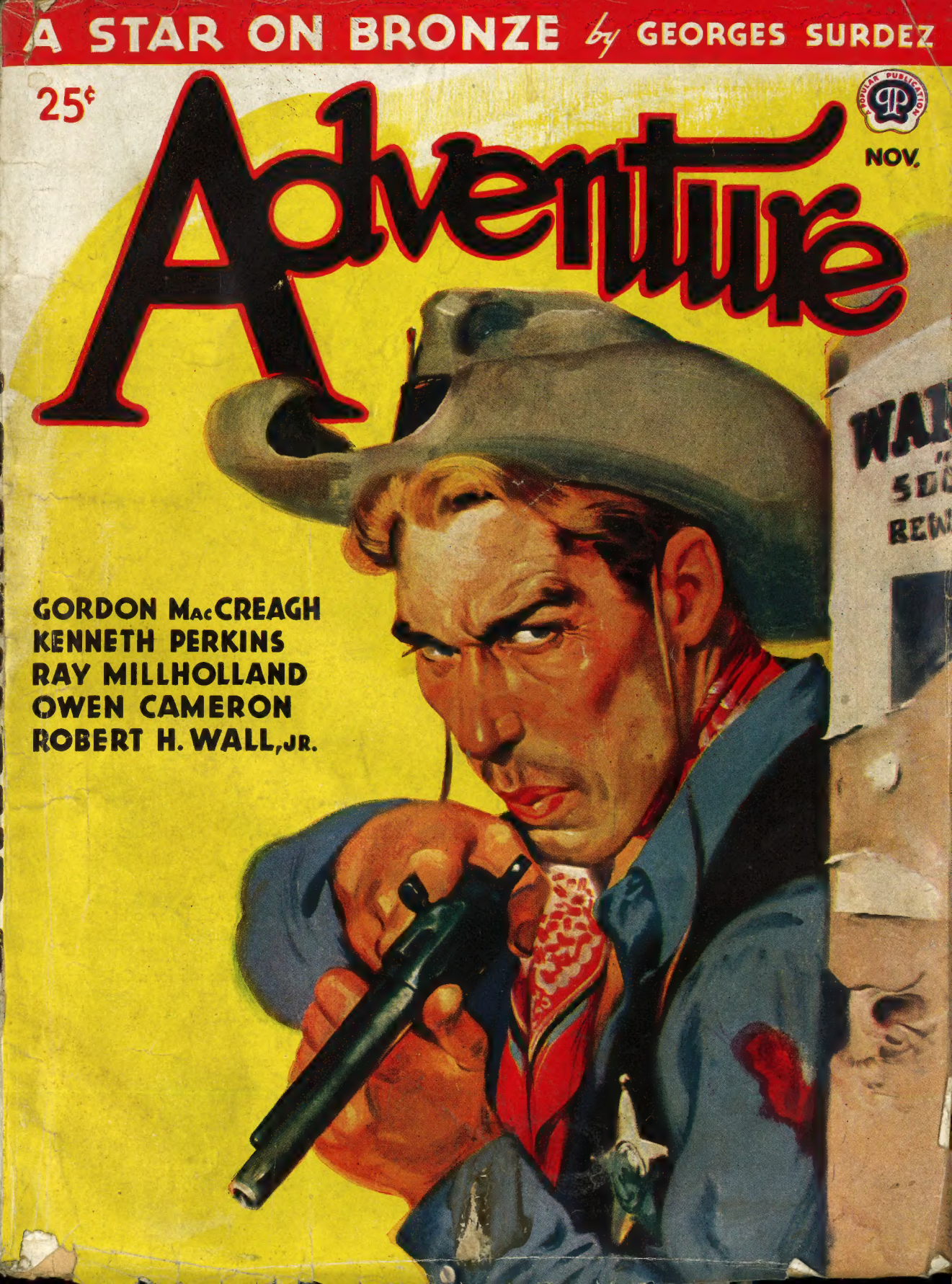

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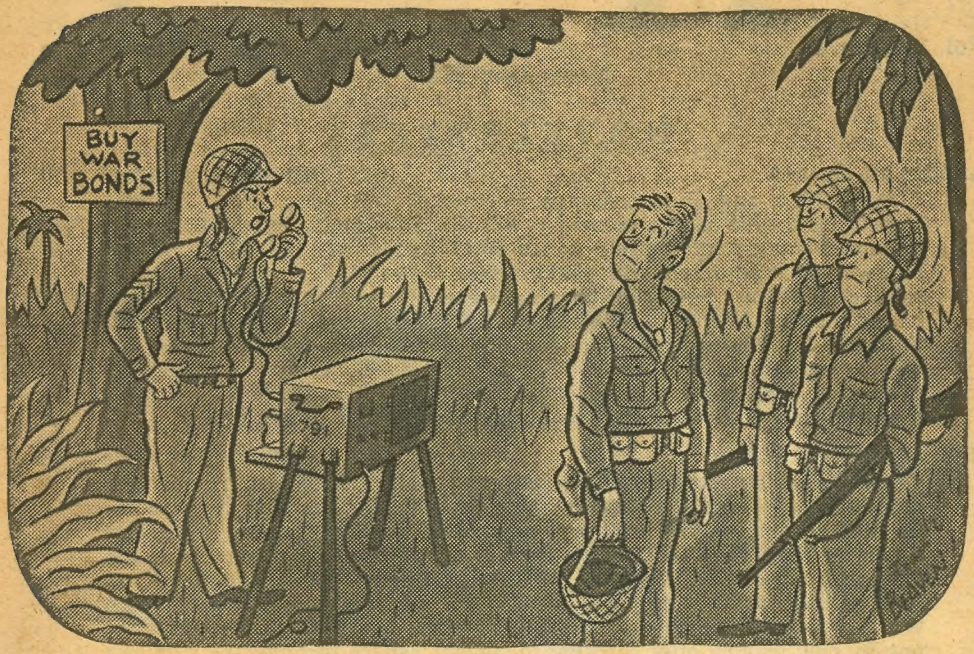
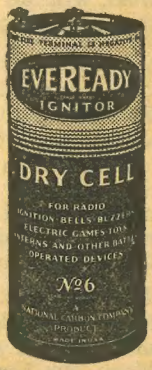


"Which one of youse guys is 'cutie-pie'?"



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Adventure
(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 114, No. 1 for November, 1945 Best of New Stories

NOVELETTES

A Star on Bronze.....GEORGES SURDEZ 30
August, 1914, and Jacques-Louis Bertheau's feet were sore. His red trousers and blue capote seemed to absorb the summer heat and he was tired and hungry and thirsty and if this was war—as indeed it was—to hell with it! And to hell with that "superior offensive spirit of the French soldier" the brass hats kept harping about as they retreated before the Boche hordes. Then . . . . September, 1944, and Jacques-Louis was still tired and hungry and thirsty and if this was war—as indeed it was—all over again—why more power to it! Hadn't the Boches, retreating now, even as he'd retreated three decades before, just brought him back from the dead and given him the first laugh he'd had in thirty years?

Ghost Crew.....KENNETH PERKINS 98
The *Kilpatric's* pantryman hankered for prairies and no sea breeze, just land and grass—and the ship's wiper craved the Patagonian sheep country that resembled his Montana home. Jim Buckley, the engineer, had a yen for the Chaco timber belt further north, for he'd grown up in the Oregon lumberlands. One and all they planned to go so far inland, as soon as they hit the coast, they'd never see salt water again. Then, with the Argentine beaches only wading distance away, death called them, one by one, leaving only Buckley to stagger ashore through the surf and wish, with all his soul, to be afloat again—a thousand miles away from that hostile coast.

SHORT STORIES

Iron Heels.....OWEN CAMERON 59
Henry was two-faced, skeptical and sneaky—according to Joe, who looked like a beet the hogs had been chewing on when Henry got through with him. All very true, in a manner of speaking, but the trouble was, Henry was also honest, which Joe could never get through his dumb and lacerated head. Even after the sheriff tried to clarify things for him in the jail house.

Potent Paint.....GORDON MacCREAGH 62
It was Africa's fabulous Prester John who said: "The worth of a spear or a horse or a bead is measured by how much a strong man desires it." Mopo, the Bunani herdsman, wanted—of all things—a tube of lipstick! And being a very strong guy—and brave to boot—he went after his heart's desire with a vengeance.

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BE OUT ON NOVEMBER 9TH ◆◆◆

Impersonal Appearance ..... JOE ARCHIBALD 70
The cop stared at Willie Dill. "Who is he and what did he do?" he asked, nudging the big oaf with his nightstick. . . . "Just a punk fighter who went twelve rounds with the Brown Bomber," Willie's manager answered cryptically and hurried his charge off into the night before the spilling arena crowd—lynch-light in every eye—could find a handy rope and a lamp post.

Old Thunder ..... RAY MILLHOLLAND 78
The ancient muzzle-loader was a worthless thing that wouldn't group five shots inside the end of a tomato can at ten rods, but young Todd Reynolds paid sixty hard-earned dollars for it thereby clinching Fabe Primble's right to the title "Meanest Man in Southern Indiana." Meanest and *maddest*, too, after Todd turned in a perfect target board with the old relic at the next week's shoot.

Nervous in the Service ..... ROBERT H. WALL, Jr. 88
When the special memorandum came through banning nude bathing at the base everyone assumed it meant malaria control but me and Stinky knew better. "Malaria control hell! It means WACs!" was his succinct analysis of the order. Some of the GIs were delighted, of course, but then there were others who'd just as soon it had been the fever. Their temperatures—and tempers—wouldn't have soared half as far.

THE SERIAL

Chains for Columbus (1st of 5 parts) ..... ALFRED POWERS 8
November 25th, 1500—a shameful day for Spain, a fateful one for young Francisco Perez, for on that date the famous Admiral of the Ocean Sea, whose explorations had brought glory and honor to the land of his adoption, was shipped to Cadiz fettered like any common felon, to stand trial for treason. And Perez, determined to right the wrong about to be done his idol, finds himself on the Inquisition's rack for his interference in matters of state.

THE FACT STORY

Alex McDougall's Pig ..... R. A. EMBERG 132
Squat, tubular, with a topheavy superstructure, she was built like a hog, but—despite the man-killing legends that grew up about her—she behaved like a lady. A cockeyed ship if there ever was one, the Great Lakes whaleback from which the submarine derived its opprobrious nickname.

DEPARTMENTS

The Camp-Fire ..... Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 6
Ask Adventure ..... Information you can't get elsewhere 138
Ask Adventure Experts ..... The men who furnish it 139
Lost Trails ..... Where old paths cross 144
The Trail Ahead ..... News of next month's issue 141

Cover painted for Adventure by Robert Stanley
Kenneth S. White, Editor

IF YOUR COPY OF THIS MAGAZINE IS LATE—
We regret that, due to the difficulties of post-war transportation, your *Adventure* may sometimes be a little late in reaching you. If this should happen, your patience will be appreciated. Please do not write complaining of the delay. It occurs after the magazine leaves our offices and is caused by conditions beyond our control.
—The Publishers.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

TWO new names on the muster-roll of our Writers' Brigade this month. Alfred Powers, whose "Chains for Columbus" gets under way on page 8, when we asked him to give an informal account of himself and the genesis of his novel for *Camp-Fire* wrote—

One out for childhood influences. An early and lasting inspiration about Columbus was what I did *not* get in the little school attended on famous Cowhouse Creek in Texas. U. S. history and such dates as 1492 were not emphasized in the curriculum there. It was Texas history I studied with special attention and special reverence. Just Columbus' luck always to be an alien. The Spaniards had resented him because he was neither from Castile nor Aragon, and here he was neglected along the winding Cowhouse because he hadn't been a Texan.

I was a youthful cowboy at the time and was later a youthful cowboy in Oklahoma. That's what I figured I'd go on being.

But when the other boys weren't looking, I bootlegged a good deal of time with books. I even went through the Bible, not dutifully, but because I found it good reading. Such a variation from the cowhand norm was bound to get out, for all I tried to keep it quiet in order to preserve the respect of my rump-in-the-saddle associates.

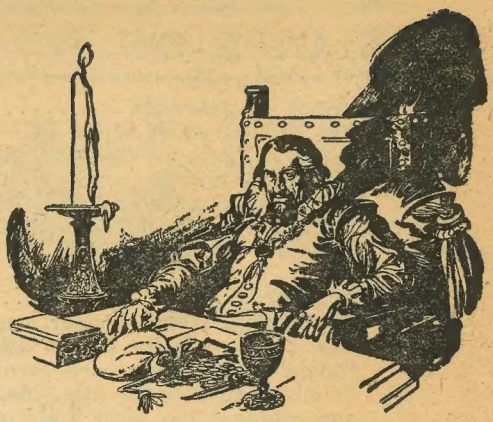
Occasionally a range boy went to a business college in Oklahoma City or even in Kansas City; occasionally a still more bookish one would go to normal school. The neighbors naturally thought that the Powers boy, if maladjusted to ranch life, would be shipped to one of these places.

"No," said the elder Powers, "he's going to the highest doggone school there is—to the University of Oklahoma."

There I enrolled in English One, a daily theme course. The teacher was Dr. V. L. Parrington, later author of "Main Currents in American Thought" and recognized as one of the country's great literary scholars. The glory of the professor, of the course, and of receiving the only *A* in it completely ruined me.

And so in time I wrote "Chains for Columbus."

Meanwhile, I had moved to Oregon and finished at the university of that state.



Afterwards I worked in the U. S. Forest Service, surveyed homesteads in the Coast Range Mountains, carpentered, taught school, did newspaper and magazine free-lancing, lectured in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, soldiered in World War I. I became a director, an administrator, an executive of various things, an editor, a book-writer—and now live in Portland where I'm Dean of the Division of Creative Writing and Publishing of the Oregon State System of Higher Education.

How did I happen to choose Columbus for the historical tale starting this month in *Adventure*?

It was not so simple as saying: "Count off the top great of all time on the fingers of two hands. Columbus would be one. Yet in the four and a half centuries since his voyages there has not been a robust fiction story about him. There have been countless articles and essays, numerous histories, many biographies, a number of poems, but no exciting story. So why not write one?"

No, it could not be so simple as that.

Could the man, his times, his geography become living, vivid, real? Would a villain and a plot be forthcoming? Could the streets of Seville in 1500 be made to seem as familiar as those of Portland in 1945? Columbus as a subject had to meet a score of such requirements—and only the reader can judge how successful is the result.

Pretty damn successful, we'd say offhand, and so apparently do Longmans Green, who plan to publish Mr. Powers' novel in book form in the spring. We'll keep you posted on the date.

AND Owen Cameron, whose amusing bit of *ruraliana Americana* appears on page 59 this month, introduces himself at our *Camp-Fire* for the first time thuswise—

I live in the mountains, forty miles from a bathtub; next-door neighbor a mile dis-

(Continued on page 136)

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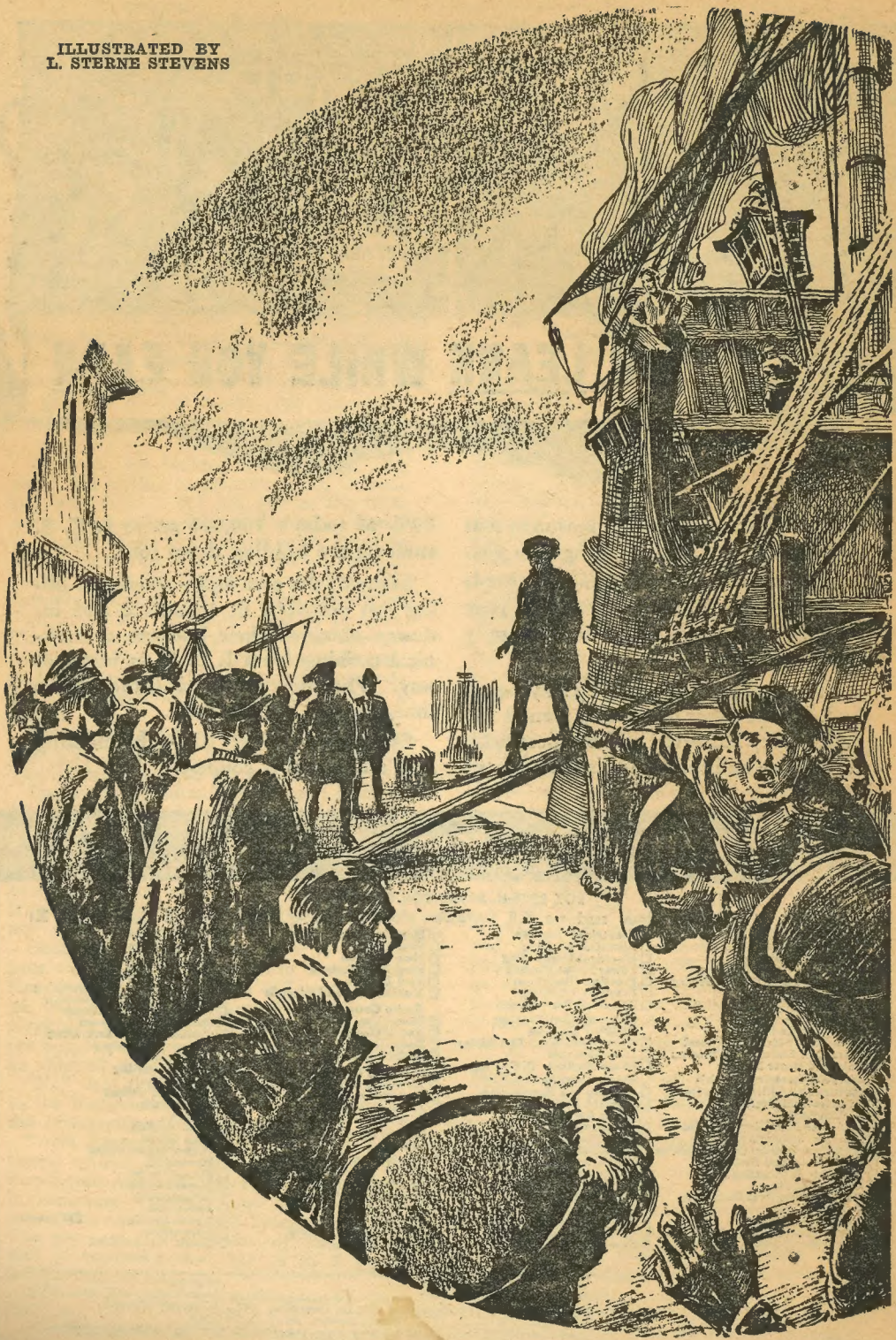

CHAINS FOR COLUMBUS

By

ALFRED POWERS

CADIZ knew me as a grave young Spaniard. I was no more so than usual on the morning of November twenty-fifth in the year 1500, that shameful day for Spain, that fateful one for me.

Upon waking I had no premonition of dark events, no greater worry than of having overslept so I would be reprimanded good and proper by Bernardo Cruz for being late. In my small attic room, up among the rafters, I hastened to a gable window to look out over the rooftops at the clock of Cadiz Cathedral. The position of the black, arrowlike hands upon the big white dial, took away all my uneasiness. Far from being behindhand, I was five minutes early.

Out upon the street, my route was along Paseo del Sur, at the southern margin of Cadiz Peninsula. It was only half a street. On one side were the tall, even fronts of buildings; on the other was the open ocean, which dashed up its surges on the embankment and covered the rocks with foam.

At this hour there was no sail as I looked south toward the Gates of Hercules; there was none as I looked west toward the far-off islands of the New World. Yet in that direction, beyond my sight, beyond the dip of the horizon into the waves, was a ship fully spread with canvas, coming to Cadiz, coming to change the whole current of my life.

What all of us saw there on the Cadiz wharf was unbelievable. Columbus was in chains! "Shame!" cried the people. "The Admiral of the Ocean Sea brought back like some low criminal. It is a dishonor to Spain!"

I traversed the narrow tongue of land to the harbor side, where the big, calm basin was thick with sails. Above were fleecy clouds blown across from Africa. But sails and clouds were not whiter than Cadiz itself, there at the tip-end of the long, slender peninsula. All the town, without a single dark building to blemish it, gleamed fresh and spotless under the morning sun. Cadiz made a pretty sight to mariners approaching it, who knew it as the whitest city in Spain, the whitest city on any shore. Holy men, visiting it for the first time, gazed at it with delight and said it was like a vision of the New Jerusalem.

My steps ended before a door above which was this sign—

BERNARDO CRUZ
Gunpowder Makers to Their Spanish Majesties King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella

Our portly proprietor had a strict rule—that his ten workmen should arrive at ten minutes before eight. To come sooner was a fine thing in his eyes; to come sooner and wait in the rain was finer still. I saw by the cathedral clock that I was early, by thirteen minutes. Emilio was already on hand, as I expected him to be. He was always first and so always had the most honored place at the right of the door. The next four lined up behind him. The remaining five formed a row at the left-hand side, the tardiest one at the end. Señor Cruz himself appeared at two minutes before the hour. His rotund middle, like one of his own kegs, protruded and shook in front of him as he waddled along the aisle between us to the door. At a glimpse he could tell in what order we had been punctual, from Emilio down. Then in a roll call he learned exactly when each man had reached the building. With this finished and the door opened, all crossed the threshold as the bells of the cathedral clock chimed eight.

The third arrival on this November morning was Juan. The fourth was not one of ourselves, but a beardless young don, richly dressed in hose, doublet, cloak, and plumed hat—black with a tall white feather. For all his garments of a man and his assured deportment of one, he was only a boy. I judged him to be not more than fifteen.

"Good morning, *señores*," he said. "Do you sell only to their majesties?"

"Oh, no, señor," I spoke up. "To anyone with money to pay."

"I wish to buy a keg."

"The door is locked now. The master will be here at two minutes before eight."

He walked away a few yards and began pacing back and forth. Then he came up and stood before the five of us now present.

"*Señores*," he remarked, "you do not seem excited."

"Oh, no, we do not find it exciting to make gunpowder. It is so only for those who use it—hunters in the mountains, soldiers in the wars, and men on the ships."

"I mean the big event, *señores*. Have you not heard? Why has it been so little announced? Christopher Columbus is returning today. The Admiral of the Ocean Sea is coming back from his third voyage. When Jonah fled the wrath of the Lord, he took ship for Tarshish, for Cadiz, *señores*, the uttermost limit of the world, where he thought even God did not dwell and would not find him. The long centuries came and went, and Cadiz, this very spot where we stand, *señores*, remained the far frontier of timid man. The ocean out yonder received a million setting suns before Columbus freed it of mystery and dread; it stretched on and on, impenetrable, endless, shoreless, until he sailed. Yet his arrival today was about to go unhonored. That is why I want a keg of gunpowder—to fire a salute to him. My friends and I found the cannon at the wharf unattended; the mayor has made no preparations; so we are arranging it. We will give Columbus fourteen guns, the most allowed except for the king and queen. Will one keg of gunpowder be enough?"

"You will need a larger keg to give reports like thunder so all Cadiz will hear, and loud enough to reach the ship and Columbus while yet two leagues away. But a larger keg, *señor*, is expensive. It costs a gold doubloon."

He resumed his pacing back and forth. At every third turn he stopped to scan the gray, vanishing distance toward the west.

SEÑOR CRUZ arrived to find only nine of us present, for our tenth man came unnoticed at his heels.

"Where's Felipe?" he demanded.

"Here I am, master."

Señor Cruz got ready to explode like his own gunpowder. He stepped in front of the quaking Felipe where he had now taken his place at the end of the left-hand line. Though he stood close enough for his bulging equator to touch the man, Señor Cruz' angry face was two spans away. "Felipe," he shouted, "you laggard, you rule-breaker, you knave! You should be dismissed. Three times this week you have been tardy, you morning-sleeper, you snore-beard! Once more late and you will go; once more late and another will be hired to burn the charcoal."

The quality of Felipe's charcoal, as much as anything else, was what made Cadiz gunpowder popular with the cannoneers, but he had no plucky spirit equal to his skill. He drooped in silence. It was our waiting customer who spoke.

"Pardon me, Señor Cruz, but the man arrived early enough so by the time you could open the door he was ready to go in with the rest of you. How then was he late?"

Señor Cruz was without words for a long moment in his astonishment. Then he fastened

a stern gaze on the young man. "Officious whelp," he asked, "you dare to bring your effrontery to this establishment which never saw you before? You are presumptuous and impertinent. These men know the rule is to be here by ten minutes before eight."

"And you, Señor Cruz, arrive when?"

"Two minutes before eight. Exactly, by the cathedral clock."

"And the door is locked so they cannot enter and begin work until you come?"

"They stand outside and wait. I will now call the roll. Emilio?"

"Seventeen minutes."

"It is well, Emilio, it is well. Always you set a good example. Francisco?"

"Thirteen minutes," I answered.

"You please me, Francisco."

When he was through, he was addressed again by the young *hidalgo*. "By the beard of my grandfather, if I have counted correctly, Señor Cruz, these ten men have waited a total of ninety minutes, an hour and a half. Do you pay for this?"

"You are an insolent trouble-maker; I will not discuss it," declared Señor Cruz, putting his key in the lock.

"I will enter with you," announced the unperturbed young man. "I wish to buy a keg of gunpowder, a large keg."

"To you, offensive *señor*, it is not for sale."

"You refuse? It is for a salute to Christopher Columbus. What will the queen say? Think you that her majesty will be pleased?"

"A keg of gunpowder, señor, is expensive. A large keg is one whole doubloon. Do you have the money?"

"My friends at the wharf have it. I wish a man to carry the gunpowder there. He can collect the money and assist us in firing the cannon."

"The man will be forty *marevidis*."

"Let him get the keg."

Senor Cruz did not hesitate whom to choose. "Emilio was here first. He can take it."

"Master," answered the favor-currying Emilio, "I prefer to remain and work for you."

"Then, Francisco, you may go."

I STARTED out with the keg on my shoulder, following along behind the young *hidalgo*. Every so often he would turn around and walk backward, talking to me as he went.

"I heard them call you Francisco," he said.

"Yes, *señor*, Francisco Perez. That is my name."

"Mine is Cortes—Hernan Cortes. With four friends now waiting for us at the cannon, I am on holiday from the University of Salamanca."

He proceeded face forward for some distance,

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entirely silent the while, as if without words unless he could see where they went. Then he turned around to travel in reverse again, all the time keeping his tongue as busy as his legs.

"We did not like this neglect of a salute to the Admiral of the Ocean Sea. We study about him at Salamanca now. It is not the same as it was some ten years ago, with the learned men twitting him when ordered by the king and queen to sit in council on his crazy schemes. If the earth were round, they supposed the leaves on the other side dropped upward—and they smiled in their whiskers. How would fare his ships across the burning equator, where the waves boiled as water in a kettle, and a dipped hand would be scalded, and the fogs were steam? If vessels and men survived over the bulge of the earth, what sails and what wind could bring them back again, up hundreds and hundreds of leagues of steepness, up heights greater than ten thousand times ten thousand waves? They do not twit him anymore. His crazy schemes and crazy dreams are part of our lessons now. An old professor at Salamanca, who was a member of that mocking council, is one of those teaching these things to us at present."

When we reached the cannon, four young dons were standing there, all about the age of Cortes, and each with richer garment than his. "Señores," he announced, "this is Francisco Perez, our gunpowder man, our cannoneer, our commander of the fourteen salvos. Francisco, meet them so you can order them about. This is Manuel de Mendoza, a marquis when he grows up and gets a beard."

"Call me Doza," this young man said.

"Here is Gonsalvo de Ovieda y Valdez, a future grandee of the Pyrenees."

"Call me G. O. V." he directed.

"Next you see Nicholas de Braganza, some day a duke in Portugal, but right now he will do whatever you say."

"That I will," he agreed. "I answer to the name of Portugee."

"And here is Alfonso de Gomez, doomed to a dreary life counting doubloons, pieces of eight, *castellanos, reals, marevidis.*"

I stood staring in fascination at his hair.

"It is kind of red, isn't it?" he asked. "But I am in good company. The queen's is red, and Columbus' used to be. But you can't call me what you think; I'll kill you if you do. Pieces-of-Eight is the name."

To these young knights of Spain I would have been only a servant in their castles, strongholds, and great *haciendas,* forever bowing, forever saying "*Si, señor,*" but there, briefly on the wharf, they accepted me as one of themselves.

"Men," I said, "take your assignments! Cortes and Doza will measure out the gunpowder into fourteen equal parts. G. O. V. will light the fuse each time. Portugee and Pieces-of-Eight will put in the balls—that is, if we are to use them."

The cannon was an old ten-foot lombard that hadn't been shot off in months. It was rusty, needed oiling, in bad condition generally. At its base was a pyramid of marble balls.

"Let's use them," proposed Cortes. "We can see them hit the distant waves. Columbus won't grudge us some extra fun while saluting him."

"In that case," I said, "the cannon has to be turned around to point at a clear place in the ocean. Where it is aimed now, we'll be bombarding the boats in the harbor."

As the six of us finished its replacement, we all looked and cried out at once. Sails that were like shadows came over the hazy rim of the sea; they lifted and whitened and took on outline as we watched. It was a four-masted caravel. A few minutes later one of three masts pushed through the mists of the horizon.

"Say, Francisco," inquired Cortes, "didn't you tell us to divide the powder into fourteen equal parts? Are you sure that's the way to do it? While the ships are a good distance away, as they are now, it will take a larger noise to reach them. So the first shots should have more powder; less, as they come closer."

"And taper off and off," objected Portugee, "until they are little more than pops of a matchlock? How will that sound? For one thing, like we are running out of gunpowder. For another, people don't like anticlimaxes in ceremonial noises."

"That's a point," admitted Cortes, "but we can save a specially big charge for the very last. When the people and Columbus get used to the lighter shots, we can burst their eardrums with the biggest one of all."

In making ready the first salvo, I found we were short of wadding to tamp down the gunpowder in the big bore of the cannon before we put the balls in. I sent Doza and Pieces-of-Eight to a nearby second-hand marine-goods place to get a quantity of used sailcloth. We waited until the ships came a little closer. Then I called out to G. O. V., "Ready, fire!"

The five cavaliers had their attention focused at the mouth of the muzzle, expecting to follow the projectile in its flight. It was so much quicker than their eyes that they did not see it at all. There was a deafening noise in their ears, a pungent smell in their noses, a blue smoke around them, and nothing more. I was the only one who observed the splash on the smooth crest of a distant billow.

THE booming of the long-silent old lombard announced to the town that some important ship was arriving. Many people began streaming down to the wharves, hitherto almost deserted except for seafaring men. When we had fired a half-dozen shots, I sud-

denly remembered a responsibility. I halted activities to take care of it. "Cortes," I asked, "haven't you forgotten something?"

"By the beard of my grandfather, so I have. *Señores,* we owe Bernardo Cruz one gold doubloon and forty *marevidis,* payable here and now to Francisco to be duly taken back and delivered with the empty keg. I happened to be short this morning, after last night, so I said you would give it to him."

"We, too, are short this morning after last night." They turned out their pockets, yielding four *castellanos,* two *reals,* and seventy *marevidis.* "See?"

"Do not worry," said Cortes, "I will pass my hat. The people will be glad to contribute for a salute to the Admiral of the Ocean Sea."

By the time we had fired twelve shots the first caravel was close enough so we could see somewhat of its details. We tried in vain, however, to make out the tall figure of Columbus among those standing on the poop deck that was built up high like a castle. A flurry among the people caused us to turn from the ship to witness the arrival of an important land personage.

"It is Fonseca; that means trouble," said Cortes. "I wish we had finished the last two shots before he got here."

Everybody in Spain knew and thousands feared this grandee, the government official over Columbus, the superintendent of the New World. He was powerful in having the ear of Ferdinand, proud, haughty, disdainful, with forgiveness to none who crossed him. His hostility to Columbus was common talk, without anyone's understanding why—whether hating him as a foreigner or in jealousy of his fame. Fonseca was now accompanied by a secretary and four soldiers.

"Work fast, Francisco, work fast," urged Cortes. "One of his soldiers is coming over here to stop us."

I stood with the long ramrod in my hands. "Sailcloth, Pieces-of-Eight," I called, "so I can tamp it down."

"All gone—only a little piece left—and no time now to go after more. But here, take my cloak!"

He tossed it to me, worth more than my wages for half a year. Even in my hurry I was conscious of the costly feel of it to my rough hands. I did not hesitate but gave it to the cannon's mouth, shoved it far back into the capacious tube, and threw the ramrod against it repeatedly until it bounced out at me. From the hands of Portugee I took a ball and rolled it in.

"Stop it!" commanded the soldier, coming up. "You can't do this."

Cortes raised his left hand and the charge went off. The unexpectedness of it made the soldier jump in his tracks.

"Oh, yes, we know how," answered Cortes. "We understand gunpowder. We have a trained man here."

"Don't try to act innocent with me. You know what I mean. It isn't permitted."

"Not permitted, soldier? A salute to the Admiral of the Ocean Sea not permitted?" Cortes raised his left hand. At the signal, without the usual order from me, G. O. V. touched off the charge.

The unexpectedness and loudness of it made the soldier jump in his tracks. "I will report this brazen insubordination," he said, and walked rapidly back to Fonseca.

"We have to hurry now faster than ever," declared Cortes, pouring in the rest of the gunpowder, more by a third than any amount we had yet used at one time.

"Here's my cloak," said Doza.

"Francisco, don't take so long to tamp it," Cortes anxiously directed. "Anything to finish it. We can't stop at thirteen shots. It's an unlucky number. Without the fourteenth the whole salute will lose its meaning. Everybody will wonder about it, and Columbus might even think it was lacking in respect."

We thought for three or four minutes after the soldier reported back that Fonseca meant to leave us alone. Not so; he had only been delayed by the arrival of the mayor of Cadiz. He was now on the way toward us with quick, angry strides. But Doza's cloak was in. The ball was in. All was ready.

Then I looked in time, out at sea in front of the cannon. "Hold it, G. O. V., hold it!" I shouted. A number of boats which had gone forth beyond the inner harbor to meet the ship, were plying about hitherto open area where the cannon was aimed. It would be murder to fire.

Cortes was on pins and needles. "Francisco, can't you do something? Quick, let's all lift this right wheel around!"

"No use," I objected. "The boats leave no clear space. Look for yourself."

"He's almost here. Isn't there a way to pull the ball out and shoot a blank charge—just the cloak, which won't hurt anybody?"

"No way," I said. "Brimstone and dragon's blood, Cortes, there's nothing we can do!"

Fonseca was upon us now. The five cavaliers at once stood at attention, extended their right feet, and bowed low from the waist with hats in hand, sweeping the ground with their plumes.

"You," Fonseca cried out to me, "mind your manners!"

The greatest cruelty of having to do his command was for the dons to see my awkwardness. But they spared me that embarrassment. As I bent over in a leap-frog kind of way, they went through their own flourishes again. So they had no eyes for me. Only Fonseca had.

"*Señores,*" he demanded, "what is the meaning of this lawlessness? The mayor of Cadiz says he authorized no salute. Your conduct is criminal. And when I sent an order here, you treated it with disobedience and contempt."

"Your Excellency," explained Cortes, "we thought you were only concerned about our inexperience and the harm we might do with the gun, and would no longer object when you learned we have a trained cannoneer. We did not know the salute was an offense in any way."

"It is, *señores,* a serious one. You have been guilty of taking into your own hands a public honor which belongs only to cities, provinces, and Spanish kingdoms, and the nation. This irresponsible and unauthorized salute to the Admiral of the Ocean Sea is at cross purposes with the government and is a mockery of the dignity of Spain, as you will see when Columbus arrives. You could properly be arrested and dungeoned. But on account of your youth I choose not to press the condemnation. I pardon you, warn you, and leave you."

"Your Excellency," ventured Cortes, "the cannon is loaded and ready. Will you allow its final shot to be fired? At present there have been thirteen salvos, an unfortunate number."

"Thirteen, *señores*? I had not thought of it. This modifies your offense, making it seem like an appropriate touch of providence, not to be improved upon if ordered and designed. No, the fourteenth must not be fired. You have done well, *señores,* to give Columbus thirteen guns."

He walked away toward that part of the wharf which the first caravel was now closely approaching.

What did he mean? We could only ask one another, each equally without answer or reasonable conjecture.

WE LEFT the vicinity of the cannon and added ourselves to the crowd that pressed forward as the ship was tied up. A long, cleated plank was leaned up to the center of the vessel where the deck was lowest. The ship's captain and a few other officers came down this, congregated at the bottom, and were joined by Fonseca and the mayor of Cadiz.

After an interval, a solitary figure stepped out upon the plank from the deck. No others were in front of him, or with him, or behind him. He was on that sloping pathway alone.

The people broke into a great cheer. It was Columbus.

From where we stood, the plank diagonalled across the clear blue sky, against which Columbus walked in silhouette as he descended—so lonely, so sorrowful, so wrapped in glory that a surge of emotion went through me and I reached up a hand to wipe my eyes. He took short steps for so tall a man, seeming to shuffle, and I wondered if this were because of the incline. Half the distance down he stopped, and turned a quarter way around to face all the

hundreds of us there on the Cadiz wharf. As he did so the cheering ceased as if suddenly snuffed out. A complete and instantaneous hush lay upon the crowd. What I saw, what all the people saw against the blue sky, was unbelievable. As he stood midway of the sloping plank, his legs half-wide apart, there stretched between them a straight, taut line, notched and black.

Columbus was in chains!

An iron band was around each ankle, and from one to the other went a linked gyve, about two feet long.

"Shame! Shame!" cried the people. "Columbus in fetters! The Admiral of the Ocean Sea brought back like some low criminal! It is a disgrace to the nation, a dishonor to Spain. Take off his chains! Free him! Unshackle him!"

A scholarly-looking old man began to speak in such a calm voice that the excited crowd interrupted their own murmurs to listen. "Spain gave the tired world an awakened pulse, and Columbus was the pulse of Spain. Yet see him yonder on the plank, the chain fastening his feet. The reproach of it will never die."

"Let's take the chains off," shouted a man in working-clothes. "Let's take them off now, right here on the wharf. We'll do it. The people of Cadiz will do it. Is Diego, the blacksmith, here?"

"I am here," he answered. "I can do it, and by the tides of the Guadalquivir, I will—as soon as I can get my small anvil, my chisel and hammer, and bring them to the wharf."

"No," said Columbus, raising his right hand. "Not here, not now. I will not allow it."

"Who did it? someone loudly asked. "Who ordered it? Was it the king? The queen? No, not she. Fonseca, was it you? The indignant people of Cadiz want to know if it was you, and soon the indignant people of all Spain will want to know. Fonseca, have you no answer?"

Indeed, he had none. He remained silent in the group at the foot of the gangplank. It was Columbus himself who spoke. He lifted his right hand again, above his head as a sign for quiet. "My friends, be not excited over my condition. In a little while the chains will be taken off. Her most Christian Majesty will have them removed when she knows the truth. Let them remain meanwhile. I have grown used to them. Not much longer will I need to wear them but I will ever keep them and they will be put in my coffin with me, so it can be said: *Here is buried Columbus and with him the chains wherein he was brought home to Spain and wherein he stood at Cadiz for all the people to see.*"

One behind the other, Cortes in the lead, we pushed and elbowed our way through the crowd, the people giving us mean looks as we squeezed between them to get in front. We found ourselves at last within three yards of Fonseca and his group waiting for Columbus to descend. He caught sight of us.

"Vicious culprits," he said, "you see what you have done. If you had not fired the cannon, no crowd would have come here to turn into a mob and to start a spirit of revolt throughout Spain against the treatment of Columbus. I cancel the pardon given a few minutes ago and say to you now that you have done immeasurable mischief. But for you the arrival would have been quiet, hardly noticed, as the government intended. Now an excited indignation will sweep over the country. You," he concluded, speaking to Cortes, "you were the ringleader in all this. What is your name?"

"Cortes—Hernan Cortes."

"An unusual name and one now inscribed in my memory."

Forseca walked away.

"Inscribed and proscribed," said Cortes, very soberly. "His vindictiveness never forgets; his vengeance never tires. Any career for me in the New World is blocked now."

COLUMBUS, after he was through speaking, continued to stand for some time midway of the plank, the chain between his legs stretched taut and showing notched and black in silhouette against the blue sky. There were

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still some protests and murmurs and exclamations of outrage, but the crowd had become considerably more silent.

"They added to the insult," said one, "by giving him a salute of thirteen guns."

Fonseca grew impatient at Columbus' standing there so long to excite sympathy.

When he descended, Fonseca bowed low to him, as did the mayor of Cadiz. Columbus bowed to them but less low than they.

I was now standing, as I say, within three yards of them and saw Columbus close and plain and heard his voice. He was very tall, and very gray, but they said his hair, once red, had been white since he was thirty. He had a dignity that chains and misfortune could not affect. He was dressed like a grandee, but soberly, with clothes that were old and worn, and in great contrast to the splendor of Fonseca's garments. Under half-circle brows his eyes were blue, freshly so, not faded for all the years and all that they had seen that other men hadn't. His face was long in a nation of long faces, and his nose proportionately so, taking up a third of the length of his countenance from his forehead to his chin. His two mustaches diagonalled out and downward straight; and he wore a forked beard. His hat, as it was pushed back a little way, showed his hair was parted in the middle. His voice had echoes of distances and sadness, adding to his general aspect of melancholy.

"Your Excellency," he said to Fonseca, "I have a letter here addressed to Dona Juana, the queen's waiting lady. I should like to send it by courier, if I have your permission."

"It is permitted, of course, Great Admiral," Fonseca said. Professional couriers were always on hand at the coming of a ship. One of these was called. "Deliver this with all haste," ordered Fonseca. Columbus took out coins to pay him.

"Are you now ready, Great Admiral?" urged Fonseca, wishing to get him away from the people.

"I am ready," said Columbus. "The thirteen guns, your Excellency," he added as they started, "Was that necessary to refine misfortune?"

"A mistake, Great Admiral. Those five young dons there did it without authority."

As they passed by us, Columbus hobbling, he stopped for a moment and looked sorrowfully into the face of Cortes. "You do not do well, young *señores,* to mock at my misfortunes. Be not like your elders at Salamanca."

"Columbus, Great Admiral," cried Cortes, but Columbus hobbled on, listening not, and hearing not.

The people turned away from the ship and followed after them. We lingered in the rear. Abruptly Cortes had left us, was running off somewhere by himself.

Columbus was helped into a government carriage. Fonseca and the mayor of Cadiz got in with him. We understood he was being taken to the Franciscan monastery, not to the Cadiz dungeon.

Suddenly there sounded the fourteenth gun, falling upon the ears of the crowd like an unexpected thunderclap, the loud explosion of the final big charge in the old lombard. Amidst the thinning blue smoke, stood Cortes.

I could see, though now at a distance, the faces of Fonseca and Columbus in the carriage. I thought the face of the former showed grimness and anger; and that of the latter pleasure for the first time since he had appeared before the people.

We joined Cortes at the cannon and there, seeing the empty gunpowder cask, I thought again of my responsibility to Bernardo Cruz. "The money for the gunpowder," I said. "You, *señor,* were to collect it in your hat from the people. Now they are gone."

"So they have, Francisco, but do not worry. Cortes will get the money for Bernardo Cruz."

"But how, *señor*? You do not have it, your friends do not have it. Senor Cruz will take it out of my wages; all I can save for two months. I will be the one who paid for saluting Columbus. How will you give me what you owe, *señor,* now, so I can take it with the empty keg to Senor Cruz?"

Cortes did not reply, for a sailor stood in front of us, already addressing himself to me. His baggage was ill-assorted. Under his left arm was a Bible. Hanging down from his right hand was a cage with a black cloth over it, wherein was a parrot as we could tell from the inarticulate, raucous grumblings inside.

"Silence!" commanded the sailor.

"Silence yourself, you dirty-bearded Spaniard," said the parrot.

The sailor explained that he wanted a messenger for the Bible which was his reason for addressing me. "Do you know Cadiz?"

"Very well, *señor.*"

"This Bible is Columbus'. He wishes it taken to a friend, Velasco Cabrera, at 117 Paseo del Sur, the third floor up, Apartment 19. The address is written here. I will give you forty *marevidis* for delivering it."

"I don't think I can," I began. "Señor Cruz will be angry."

"Not so," said Cortes. "You are still in our employ. We still have your services. I give permission for you to deliver the book and take the fee. Also, since this is for Columbus, I will go along with you. *Señores,*" he said to his friends, "I will see you at one o'clock at the inn of the Indies. . . Are you ready, Francisco? Do you follow a few paces to my rear so that we may walk through Cadiz with suitable dignity."

The sailor went on, the parrot repeating over and over, but more faintly as the distance increased: "Silence yourself, you dirty-bearded Spaniard."

CHAPTER II

THE BIBLE OF COLUMBUS

WE FOUND No. 117 Paseo del Sur to be a boarding-house presided over by a *señora*. "We wish to see Señor Cabrera," Cortes announced. "We bring an important package."

"Señor Cabrera is not here any more. He has returned to Valladolid."

"How long ago, *señora*?"

"Five weeks, *cabellero*."

"Did he tell you his new location?"

"Yes, but I do not remember it. I will get the slip of paper on which he wrote it."

When she brought this, Cortes copied it down. The address was No. 83 Calle de Salvador, Valladolid.

"Do you have a *castellano*?" Cortes asked me.

I handed him one of the four given me from the scrapings of the dons' pockets towards payment for the gunpowder, and Cortes handed it to the *señora*. He thanked her and we left. He went ahead and I followed respectfully behind, carrying the Bible under my arm.

"Cortes, will you send a messenger to Valladolid?"

He turned around to face me, walking backwards as he replied: "We can forward it by some regular conveyance. It is just a Bible and probably there is no hurry. I suppose Cabrera was some devout friend whom Columbus wished to remember in this way. Yet, wait a minute, I have just thought of something. He must have had the address all written out and the book must have been put in the sailor's hands before the ship arrived at Cadiz. He didn't know Cabrera had left town and gone to Valladolid. Then why didn't he expect the man to be at the wharf so he could give the Bible to him in person? Nobody, not even Fonseca, could have objected to anything as innocent as that. But he evidently assumed Cabrera would not be there. Let's look at the book."

We stopped and I took the volume from under my arm with a special reverence. "Just think, Cortes, this very Bible must often have given Columbus strength in hours of loneliness and time of danger in the distant reaches of the ocean."

Immediately after he began turning through the pages, he exclaimed: "What have we here?" Because someone might pass and be curious, he did not remove whatever he had found. I stepped to his side, looked over his shoulder, and saw a sealed letter addressed to the queen at the Alhambra Palace, Granada. He quickly went through the rest of the pages to the end. At what was there he let out a still louder exclamation: "By the beard of my grandfather, see this!"

A piece of sailcloth had been cut a little smaller than a Bible leaf so that the closed book would completely conceal it. Over the surface of this cloth had been sewed as many gold doubloons as the area would hold. Threads went back and forth across the faces of the coins to fasten them on tight.

"Just think, Cortes, this very Bible must have given Columbus strength in time of danger in the distant reaches of the ocean."

The meaning was plain. Columbus was smuggling through a letter to the queen and this money was to be used as expenses for getting the message from Cadiz to Granada.

"This gives a different complexion to the matter," declared Cortes. "The Bible becomes tremendously important. Columbus is appealing directly to her majesty without Fonseca's knowing it. She must get this letter at all costs. And we must protect the secrecy of it at all costs. The risk is now too great to send it to Señor Cabrera. To reach him is likewise too slow because from here to Valladolid is more than twice as far as from here straight to Granada. Francisco, I must be the messenger in Cabrera's place. I, Hernan Cortes, without delay and without fail, must put the letter in the queen's own hands at the Alhambra Palace. I will ask one of my friends, perhaps Pieces-of-

Eight, to go with me, but I cannot get in touch with him until one o'clock when we are all meeting at the Inn of the Indies."

"Then," said I, "there is time to go to Bernardo Cruz and pay for the gunpowder."

"But the money, Francisco. We still don't have it. I can't pay until I see my friends at one o'clock. They will have refilled their pockets by then, especially Pieces-of-Eight—you remember, the redheaded fellow who is the Seville banker's son."

"Couldn't you use one of the doubloons in the Bible?" I suggested.

"By my conscience, yes. The salutes were for Columbus. He shouldn't mind paying for them. There will be plenty of money left for messenger expenses to Granada."

He placed the Bible carefully under my arm with the injunction I must be conscious of its presence there every minute. We walked together for several blocks. Farther along I meant to turn off and go down to the wharf to pick up the empty gunpowder keg, while Cortes went on ahead to pay Señor Cruz.

We approached a group of people listening to someone as loud-voiced as the town crier. We stopped and joined this small crowd. The speaker was the sailor.

"Since he was the one Columbus trusted with the letter in the first place," said Cortes, "I suppose we ought to let him know that Cabrera has left town."

THE sailor had found a vacant, roofless place between two buildings, running about halfway back to the rear wall of a structure that faced the street beyond. Close to this wall he had set up a rough table on which now rested the black-hooded parrot cage. A number of people were inside waiting for the amusement to start. Others were still hesitating on the outside. The sailor stood on a box. "Come all," he urged, "come everybody and see the amazing parrot, which arrived not more than two hours ago on the ship of Columbus, a fresh marvel from the New World. Cadiz people have the privilege of first witnessing the performance of this remarkable bird, even before he is exhibited to the king and queen. Come, *señores,* come *señoras* and *señoritas* and hear him talk, come *muchachas* and *muchachos,* come *niños,* and look at such a parrot as was never in Spain before.

"Hearken to his strange message and wonder, friends, even as I have wondered whence it came, from what unexplored country or unknown paradise. Listen to the mysterious name he pronounces, a name that never previously fell upon Christian ears. Listen, my friends, and wonder even as I have wondered whether it is the name of a human or a god. The cost is only a small *marevidi* for adults. It is only a very small *blanca* for children over ten. *Niños* under ten are free if accompanied by parents."

A man, a woman, and a boy came up, the man with his purse out. "For us, then, it is two *marevidis* and a *blanca?*"

"A *marevidi* each, *señor,* for yourself and the *señora;* two *marevidis* in all, for I see your bright boy is under ten." One could not help seeing indeed that he was over twelve. "But remember, *señor,* that the boy enters at his own risk of what he may hear. Secure from him a promise that when the bird gets started on his rough talk, which I am powerless to prevent, from which he cannot be stopped, the *muchacho* will hold his hands over his ears until signalled that it is safe to listen again. . . Come, friends, come everybody, come all. The performance of the marvelous parrot is about to begin; soon you will hear his voice suddenly fall into a tone of reverence, of adoration, of worship, while he utters a name of unfathomable mystery."

A man, accompanied by a small girl, stepped up. Cortes and I were next. Others crowded behind us to pay their admissions.

"We wish to see . . ." began Cortes.

"Yes, *señor,*" broke in the sailor, feeling hurried in the press of customers, "see the parrot and hear him."

Cortes turned to me. "After all, Francisco, we might as well. We can do nothing about the Granada trip until I meet my friends at one o'clock."

He motioned me to produce the entrance fees for both of us, which I did without reluctance this time, since Señor Cruz was to be paid with one of the Columbus doubloons. He offered the two *marevidis* to the sailor, who meanwhile during the delay had recognized who we were. He waved the coins away, indicating we were to enter free. My right side was toward him; the Bible was under my left arm; his attention, besides, was rushed and confused. So he did not see that I still carried the book undelivered.

Somewhat beyond the edge of the group, I observed two men who seemed in no hurry to get in line, but rather stood a few yards aloof by themselves. They had sly, sneaking looks, and one of them whispered mysteriously into the ears of the other. Then the whisperer joined those approaching the sailor to pay, while number two was walking briskly off as we entered.

When the place was full, the sailor hired a boy to act as doorkeeper, while he took a position behind the table, with the parrot in front of him.

He picked out a man with a tangled and unkempt set of whiskers. "*Señor,*" he said, "will you step up, please. The parrot will not hurt you. For a moment we shall leave the black cloth over the cage. Stand close, *señor,* stoop down and say to him in an impatient tone:

'Silence!' Say it even if he is silent already. Keep saying it at frequent intervals until he answers."

The man repeated it three times before the parrot suddenly replied: "Silence yourself, you dirty-bearded Spaniard." The audience laughed, and the man retired in confusion and embarassment, stroking his insulted beard.

"Carramba!" the bird now said. The sailor put his hands over his two ears and made signs that the children should do likewise. All their fists duly went up to press tightly the sides of their heads. *"El diablo!"* continued the parrot. *"Por Dios! Que demonio! Fuego de Pluto!"*

Here the sailor signalled that hands could come from ears. "He's through now with the worst," he announced. After a minute or two the parrot launched into a series of commands and ship talk. "Come here, Pico, you infernal rogue. . . Starboard watch, ahoy! Eight bells! . . . Aye, aye, sir. . . Out of your hammocks, you drag-heeled lubbers." He changed to some remarks of a wholly different nature. "Columbus in chains. . . Their Christian Majesties, Ferdinand and Isabella . . . I am sick with the fever." Then the exhibitor told all to listen carefully. The parrot's tone changed to solemnity as he said: "Lord, my lord, my great lord Montezuma."

"That, my friends, is the mysterious message," explained the sailor. "Who was or is Montezuma? Was he or is he a great monarch ruling rich kingdoms never heard of? Or was he or is he a great god? Nobody knows. In all the islands of the Indies there is no one who ever saw Montezuma, or could describe him, or could tell in what land or celestial region he dwelt. The parrot was shipped in from a long distance west of the explored country. At first the words were spoken in the solemn tone you have just heard but in seven foreign words. The native who had traded for the bird with these foreigners from far off said he had learned by much questioning what was the translation of the utterance without being able to find out its meaning or aught concerning the person mentioned.

"I taught the bird to pronounce the homage in equivalent Spanish rather than to go on saying it in the unknown tongue. But he kept the reverent tone, and I wondered what made him do it. Did the word Montezuma cause him to recognize the utterance as the same, continuing to impress with timidity and awe the spirit of this winged creature? Or had I unconsciously copied the orginal tone myself when I was teaching the Spanish translation? The bird was expensive. Parrots are plentiful in the New World and as a rule they are cheap, but for this one I had to give a gold ducat."

THE parrot began all over again and had gone halfway through his profanity when there was an interruption.

"Make way for a grandee of Spain," cried the sailor.

Fonseca had come. He was accompanied, at at the wharf, by his secretary and four soldiers. Two of the soldiers halted at the entrance. Two preceded Fonseca and the secretary as they made their way along the aisle cleared by the retreating people. Following them was the second of the two sly-looking men. He joined his comrade at the front and whispered in his ear.

"Nobody will leave," announced the two soldiers at the entrance.

"We are sorry to have no chairs, Your Excellency," said the sailor.

"I will stand. Proceed with the performance. Repeat your usual speech exactly. And put the bird through all the talk he is accustomed to use. I want to hear the whole of it. Did you understand me? Let him start, I say."

The bird was silent and refused to commence. The sailor had stage fright. "He is sometimes stubborn, Your Excellency. Kindly be patient."

"He was talking fluently enough before," complained Fonseca. "I advise you to get started. My time is valuable."

At last, after such a long interval that we could see the sweat on the sailor's forehead, the bird responded to the persuasions of his master and began rattling off his talk, not stopping until he had given it all except the Montezuma part.

The sailor twisted his throat in his collar and wiped more sweat off his forehead with his sleeve and said: "Listen carefully, Your Excellency, my friends."

The parrot's voice changed upon the moment as he spoke: "Lord, my lord, my great lord Montezuma."

The secretary took it down and read it back to Fonseca, who demanded of the sailor: "Who was this Montezuma?"

"Your Excellency, nobody knows who he is—or was, if he be no longer living."

"Who was he?" Fonseca demanded again, loudly, imperiously. "I want no evasions, no lies."

"Upon my honor, sir, I speak the truth. I do not know. I was never able to learn."

The secretary was putting all these questions and answers down. Cortes and I stood side by side about halfway back. Just in front of us was a Franciscan friar, with a Bible under his right arm.

"Sailor, what is your name?"

"Pico of Hispaniola, sir."

"You have been a sailor with Columbus?"

"On all three voyages, sir."

"Isn't it true that Columbus knows this great lord Montezuma? Isn't it true he is a powerful prince in the Indies to whom Columbus gave fealty and loyalty above what he gave to their most Christian Majesties of Spain?"

"Columbus does not know Montezuma, sir. It is as I said, nobody knows Montezuma."

The whisperer leaned over and spoke into Fonseca's ear and Fonseca at once addressed the sailor accusingly. "You were seen upon the wharf with a Bible that belonged to Columbus. Where is that Bible?"

Cortes bumped into the friar, striking the elbow that hugged the Bible, which fell to the earth. Cortes stopped to pick it up and, in stooping, jerked the Bible from under my arm. Rising up, he brushed the Bible and put it back under the priest's arm and begged his forgiveness for jostling him. I felt my elbow pulled a little from my side. I did not look, keeping my gaze straight ahead, but I was aware of a replacement under my arm.

Meanwhile the sailor had answered: "I gave Columbus' Bible to a messenger, sir."

I awaited stern identity by Fonseca.

"Is the messenger in this crowd?"

The sailor slowly and carefully surveyed the faces of the men, including ours. "I do not see him, sir. He is not here."

The whisperer again put his mouth to Fonseca's ear, and Fonseca spoke inaudibly to the secretary, who called out: "Francisco Perez, are you present?"

I was pointed out by the whisperer, and wondered how he should know me, since I had never set eyes on him before coming to this exhibit. Of that I was certain. I swallowed a few times and answered timidly: "Here, sir."

The cathedral clock began chiming the noonday hour. The priest turned and, answering this summons, left. Cortes followed him, but only as far as the exit. Here the two soldiers said: "No one will leave. The priest, yes. No one else." Cortes remained at the back, standing more than half concealed behind tall men.

"Francisco Perez, come forward with the Bible," ordered the secretary.

WHEN I came up, I saw by Fonseca's expression that he recognized me as one of the cannon-shooting boys at the wharf, the plebeian one of boorish manners. "Hand me the Bible," he ordered, "and do it with a bow." I expected to have the letter and the coins revealed at once. I noticed a great uneasiness upon the countenance of the sailor. But Fonseca opened the Bible, turned through it, and returned it to me with the remark: "It is an ordinary volume of the sacred scriptures. . . You were sent by the sailor to deliver the book to someone in Cadiz?"

"Yes, Your Excellency."

"To whom?"

"To Señor Velasco Cabrera at No. 117 Paseo del Sur."

"Why didn't you do so?"

"Señor Cabrera has moved away from Cadiz, Your Excellency. He has gone to Valladolid to live."

"You are excused, Francisco Perez."

As I returned to nearly the same place where I had stood before, I caught a glimpse of Cortes, still making himself low and inconspicuous.

The whisperer again communicated something to Fonseca, who summoned me in his own voice this time, not waiting for the secretary to do so. "Come back here, Francisco Perez."

"Yes, sir," I answered, feeling all eyes upon me as I returned and stood before him trembling.

"Hand me the Bible!" He looked through it

and then observed: "I thought it seemed overnew to have been on a long voyage and to have been read all those months in all kinds of weather by a devout man. This Bible was printed in Seville in 1499, a good many months after Columbus had left on his third voyage. This is not Columbus' Bible at all. Francisco Perez, what became of his Bible? What did you do with it? Tell me, where have you concealed it?"

"I do not know, Your Excellency."

"The effrontery, the insolence! You dare stand there and tell me you do not know? You dare stand there and lie to my face? Speak out—what did you do with it?"

"In some way, sir—I cannot understand how it happened—but somebody must have taken the one I had under my arm and left this one. I was very much interested in the parrot, sir, and what he said, and it was done without my knowing it."

"Such a story is outrageous and an insult. You and the sailor are in collusion. I cannot remain longer. This has become very serious. The bird is undoubtedly uttering the name of a false god or usurping prince. In either case, the guilt of you two is of such proportions that it must be investigated. I order the parrot confiscated; I will personally deliver it to the king and queen; if you, sailor, are proved innocent, it will be returned to you."

"But my parrot, Your Excellency . . ." began the sailor.

"Stop! Hear your sentence. The sailor who calls himself Pico of Hispaniola and his confederate, Francisco Perez, are hereby and now ordered to be turned over to the Spanish Inquisition, which will be able to learn the truth about these serious matters. Soldiers at the entrance, go summon the constables of the Inquisition. The people are now free to leave. You men," he said to the two soldiers up front, "guard them until the Inquisition calls for them."

When I looked toward the exit, Cortes had already gone. The whisperer and his companion went out with expressions of satisfaction upon their deceitful faces. I knew now that they were spies of the Inquisition. Fonseca and the secretary left, the secretary carrying the parrot cage. The black cloth was draped over it again and the bird was silent.

The sailor and I looked at each other as ones upon whom had fallen the pronouncement of doom. There was no fate worse than being turned over to the Spanish Inquisition, the awful court before which none were innocent, as much without justice as without mercy. It was a stern, selfish, relentless instrument, not of the church but of the Spanish sovereigns. They appointed the inquisitors, they controlled it, and the church was powerless to reform it or give it compassion for the bodies and souls of men.

CHAPTER III

"NO. 77"

THERE soon arrived two constables of the dread tribunal, brisk of movement and with an assured air of authority. They came to a stop about six paces away, and announced together: "Agents of the Inquisition come to take Francisco Perez and Pico of Hispaniola."

They marched rapidly forward, keeping step, and stood suddenly still in their tracks in front of us, like soldiers halting. Almost before I knew it, I was handcuffed with leather manacles. Then the man knelt at my feet, as a subject might kneel before his king, but in the act there was just the reverse of homage. He fastened my ankles together with another pair of leather shackles. Meanwhile, I looked down at my wrist bindings and saw that these were not new, but old and black and smooth from long service in clasping the sweaty flesh of victims. Pico at my side was similarly fettered. The two constables rose up from their kneeling at the same moment. "Come!" they said.

I forced a question out of my dry throat. "Will our absence be long? If so, let me send a message to Bernardo Cruz where I work."

"And let me get word to Columbus at the Franciscan monastery," spoke up the sailor.

The constables smiled at our simplicity and one of them explained: "When summoned to the Inquisition, *señores,* you go without preparation and without good-bys. You just disappear. No one knows what has happened to you and no one asks."

"But we are innocent," protested the sailor.

"Yes, innocent," repeated the man sarcastically. "We hear that from every culprit we arrest. But the Inquisition has ways of finding out the truth."

Pico lifted up his manacled hands and pointed them now at one constable, now at another, as he spoke.

"The boy is guilty of no wrong. I tell you I am guilty of none, and, *señores* of the Inquisition, do you know who I am? Do you know that Pico of Hispaniola has been a sailor with Columbus on all three voyages? In 1492 the crews were packed with conscripts, dregs of the waterfront, and mutinous rogues out of jail. Those on the *Santa Maria* told frightful tales of the unknown ocean, and became more afraid as they talked, and courage oozed out of me as I listened. Then I would stand by myself at the rail to look at Columbus as he ever gazed ahead from the forward deck—and will you believe it, *señores,* my courage came back to me."

"We must go," interrupted the constable. "We must take you to the dungeon."

The sailor pointed his manacled hands afresh

in the face of the man, and went on: "Columbus, like a grandee in rich scarlet clothes, with a tall plume in his hat, knelt upon the New World and stooped and kissed it, and I and all the others did the same, while the wondering natives watched. We gave them tiny, tinkling hawk-bells, and another gift they could not see—the dark gift of toil. They had not known work since the beginning of the world; now they could not rest till the end of it. Came midnight of Christmas Eve, and everybody but a heedless boy asleep and snoring. The *Santa Maria* went aground in the breakers. Later, when we left for home, a colony remained behind—the lost colony of La Navidad—and I might have been one of the thirty-nine never seen nor heard of again if Columbus hadn't said he needed me on the *Niña* that carried us back to Spain. I sailed with the great admiral on the second voyage; just today I have returned from the third. Now, *señores,* do you know who I am?"

"Yes, you are a prisoner of the Inquisition, no more, no less. The high official, the grandee in his castle, the rich person with his doubloons —these and you and the humblest laborer are exactly the same before the Inquisition. In its judgment hall, *señor,* all men are brought to a common level."

One constable had done all the talking. The other now spoke shortly and impatiently.

"In all conscience, haven't we had enough of this lip? Let us be off with them to the dungeon."

They took us by our elbows and began ushering us along.

"By Hurtado's cat," complained Pico, "I don't like this hobbled, short-step way of traveling. Do we walk far?"

"Inquisition prisoners are always taken there in a carriage," said the talkative constable.

A vehicle was waiting for us. We climbed in and sat opposite our two attendants. This was my first carriage ride since coming to Cadiz. I could not help thinking I might be like many a poor Spaniard whose only luxury was his funeral. There was no talk. Pico hummed a tune and kept time with his fettered feet on the carriage floor.

WE DROVE westward and came to a building at the very end of the peninsula. Its masonry, extending back into the now ebbing sea, showed water stains several feet up that marked where the tides reached at flood. Except for these discolorations, it was white and gleaming like all the other buildings of Cadiz. So its outside revealed nothing of its sinister character. Nor did this habitation of so much human woe have any name to identify it—only "No. 77" above the main door.

In single file, with one constable going ahead and one following behind, we entered this terrible sanctuary and were directed into a small room where awaited us the inquisitor, the secretary, and the jailer.

As we stepped inside, another door was closing upon some departing visitor. His hand still held the inner knob. His wrist curved around the edge of the portal. The hand and wrist were all I saw; they protruded from a white sleeve; their covering of black hair was almost as thick as an animal's. Up to this time I had accepted my fate with heavy despair. Now my senses were kindled into lively terror.

"To their cells below," ordered the inquisitor. "The young one first. Here is his number."

The jailer reached for the slip of paper and said to me: "Come!"

He was a lank, narrow-shouldered individual with coughing spells. Stopping to unlock three doors, he led me down to the bottom of the building, to a cellar under a cellar. Here we came to a fourth door more ponderous than the others. The bolt was shoved back with a clattering report, and the hinges creaked loudly as if rusted and needing oil. This let us into a damp, dark passageway only four feet wide but sixty feet long. At the far end, near the top, was a small, barred loophole, through which came the only light there was and the sound of the ocean surf dashing against the walls. On the left side were three doors, irregular distances apart; on the right side were half a dozen, evenly spaced. We did not halt until we came to number six.

"Yours," he said.

"Which will be the sailor's?" I asked.

He coughed and answered nothing.

No noises reached me from behind the partitions either on the right or left. There was only the ocean's heavy beat through the loophole, another fit of coughing, and the grating of the lock as the jailer turned his key.

I stepped into a cell about eight feet by seven. This had a single loophole which, high above my head, ran like a little tunnel through the thick stone. The entering sunlight made a distorted square upon the farther wall, and the column of rays sloping across the cell was filled with gnats. On the floor, near a corner, were two patches of dark, dry blood. Eight fateful words were scratched across the oak door: *This closes on misery; it opens on death.* In one wall were four iron rings, with chains hanging from them. The walls themselves, for all their thickness, were damp and cold to the touch. This prison room below the water level had a moldy chill which no brazier seemed ever to have dried and warmed.

The bed consisted of a bench of masonry, a thin straw mattress, some moist blankets. The bench lacked two feet of reaching the wall of the passageway; when the door was opened and thrown back, this space would hardly be noticed by anyone entering the cell.

As the jailer began drawing the door to

after him, I asked: "Aren't you going to unfasten me? You surely don't think I can get out of here?"

"Learn now," he answered, "not to waste your breath. The Inquisition answers no questions, grants no requests, hears no complaints."

The door swung shut with a heavy jar. I heard the assorted frictions of the lock. Then complete silence reigned in my deep basement chamber. In the oppressive quiet I strainedly listened, but the world and the sounds of the world were shut out, except the dulled cadences of the sea. I wondered about the keyhole—why for such a big key it did not let in any noises strong enough for the ears to catch. The jailer's steps in departing had been wholly hushed, though in arriving they had tapped, tapped loudly upon the stone floor. It was as if he still stood there and hadn't left at all. I stooped to look and harken. There was no keyhole, none on the inside whatever. It was only on the outside and went but partway through the thick door.

TWO hours in that soundless dungeon seemed like a day. Then the jailer returned to take me to the judgment hall. The grim transactions of the Inquisition were so secret that this hall was kept trebly bolted. The inquisitor and the secretary inserted separate keys and unlocked the door from the inside. The jailer unlocked it from the outside. Always three officials had to arrange for any entrance or any exit.

These three took seats at a long table, with the inquisitor in the center. Back a few feet was a stool between two standing constables. There I sat facing the inquisitor, who read a document and paid no attention to me for several minutes. Finally he looked at me sternly.

"Rise and stand," ordered a constable in a low voice.

"Francisco Perez," said the inquisitor with impressive slowness, "do you swear to tell the truth?"

When I did not answer at once, the same constable prodded me with a kind of club he carried. "What am I to say?" I choked out in a hoarse half-whisper.

"Swear."

"I swear, honorable *señor.*"

"Do you solemnly swear that you will never tell what happened here, never speak of the things you have seen, of the things you have heard?"

"I swear."

"Swear as a Christian, a Spaniard, and an honest man. Repeat and swear."

By such an oath, from every victim, the tribunal was made much more terrible than regular courts. Thus it preserved an impenetrable secrecy to magnify its dread and

I sat on a stool between two standing constables facing the inquisitor.

awe. The Inquisition was the only thing besides death that could not be known until experienced.

"Francisco Perez," he continued, "our records say you are fifteen years old. You came from Cordova to Cadiz eight months ago. You work in the gunpowder factory of Bernardo Cruz. Are these facts correct?"

"They are correct, Honorable Señor."

"We notice that Bernardo Cruz pays you forty *marevidis* a day. You live frugally. You have been only twice to the bull arena since coming to Cadiz. So you have saved money. Tell us of it, Francisco."

"I keep all of the money I can, honorable *señor.* Every day I keep it and do not spend it, so that sometime I will start a gunpowder factory in the New World, so I will own it, and the kegs will have these letters burned into the heads: *F. Perez, Santo Domingo.* For this I have already put away a gold doubloon, a silver *real,* a *castellano,* two pieces of eight, twenty *marevidis,* and seven little *blancas.*"

"The money is well concealed somewhere in your room in a leather pouch. Is it not so? You frequently take out the coins to amuse yourself with them, to examine their designs, to polish them to greater brightness. Is it not so?"

"It is so."

"You live in an attic room with excellent

hiding-places between the rafters and the roof. You used such a place. Is it not so?"

"It is so."

"We will send a messenger for the purse. This is now the property of the Inquisition. By describing the exact rafter you will save the messenger's time . . . Now, with these preliminaries out of the way, do you know a god called Montezuma from the New World? Have you helped to introduce him into Spain? Have you assisted the sailor known as Pico of Hispaniola in reaching the people by means of a parrot taught to speak revently in worshipful tones, 'Lord, my lord, my great lord Montezuma?'"

"I know naught of him."

The inquisitor looked at me with a frown wrinkling his forehead. "You have sworn to tell the truth."

"I know him not."

"Our records show that you helped to conceal a Bible brought back by Christopher Columbus. Where is that Bible?"

"I cannot inform the honorable *señor* where it is because I do not know. I had it under my arm while listening to the parrot. My attention was greatly absorbed. Someone took it and substituted another Bible."

I was still determined not to involve Cortes, even though he had got me into a desperate plight and then had fled to save his own skin. I meant at all cost to protect Columbus from serious embarrassment over the Bible. And if Cortes were brought into the case, the trail might lead from him straight to the admiral. I was honest in declaring my ignorance of the Bible's whereabouts. I felt concerned on Columbus' account as to what had become of it. Under the circumstances, how would Cortes have gone about recovering it? What was the likeliest thing for the friar to do when he learned the book wasn't his and saw what it concealed? Did Columbus know it hadn't been delivered and was in strange hands in Cadiz? I was beset anxiously by these and other questions.

The dissatisfied inquisitor addressed me sharply: "Francisco Perez, we will give you four hours to think of what you have said and failed to say. You have until eight o'clock tonight to choose either your salvation or your ruin . . . Jailer, return him to his dungeon."

As we neared my cell, I asked: "Has the sailor testified yet? Is this his room?"

At the moment I had reached the door next to mine. As I spoke, I hit it a blow with my coupled fists. The jailer gave me such a shove that I almost fell forward on my face, hobbled as I was. By the time I recovered my balance, still looking down, I was in front of the second door on the left side of the passageway. My glance fell upon a nick in the stone at my feet, close to the threshold of that unknown apartment—a roundish nick no bigger than a *maravidi*, but rather deep, and red at the bottom, as though a drop of scarlet liquid had escaped the mop.

They wore cone-shaped masks with eyeholes the size of a doubloon.

The episode drew no word from the jailer, who delivered me to my soundless quarters and left at once. Had my trifling with the door irritated him because Pico was really lodged next to me? Would they have risked the possibility of our communicating through the neighboring loopholes? I now stood under mine and yelled at the top of my voice: "Pico! Pico! Do you hear me, Pico?"

There was no answer.

MY DUNGEON was as black and silent as a tomb when the coughing sheriff came for me with a candle, and I knew it was time for my eight o'clock appointment. At once the inquisitor addressed me in a quick, impatient manner: "You were not born deaf. You heard my warning four hours ago. Are you ready to tell the truth?"

"Honorable *señor*, I spoke the truth before. I speak it now. This Montezuma god is not known to me, nor where may be found the Bible of Columbus."

"Take him back to his dungeon."

In the middle of the night I was suddenly awakened by the sound of my cell door opening and the light of a candle in my eyes. I lifted up my head and shoulders to look for a

moment at four masked men, and then lay down again to await their summons, shivering at what might be the nature of it. They wore black hose and shoes; white smocks coming halfway to the knees, and girdled at the waist by black sashes; and cone-shaped masks of black cloth, with eye-holes the size of a doubloon.

Even as I lay there expecting the worst from these frightful apparitions, I found myself trying to identify them beneath their disguises. The smallish figure with much nervous energy might be the inquisitor. The person of unusual tallness and leanness, with a hacking cough as a gift of his own dungeons, was unmistakably the jailer. The short pudgy one had the same pudgy hands as the secretary who had taken down everything I said in the judgment hall. The fourth man, holding the candle, leaned so low over me that I saw the motions of his black eyes through the oval apertures in the mask. His shoulders were broad. He took hold of the strap connecting my wrists and pulled on it, as a sign I was to rise. The left hand that did this and the right hand holding the candle, both showed hairy backs, with black growths beginning just behind the knuckles and becoming almost as thick as an animal's where they disappeared under the white sleeves of his smock. His voice was mumbling and hoarse, and I had never heard it before, but I had seen one of those hands.

"You go on a visit," he announced. "You go on a visit with these three *señores* and me. I am Zorilla who persuades men to tell the truth. To your feet and come!"

A cone-shaped leather mask was dropped over my head, its lower edges resting on my shoulders. It had no eye-holes. Its purpose was to blindfold me so I could not see the route we were going, nor afterwards remember the geography of my destination except confusedly like some terrible place in a nightmare.

We walked in various directions; a number of doors were opened; we went up one flight of steps and after a good deal of traveling came down another flight. Then we halted and Zorilla said: "Hold the candle while I unlock." The lower rim of the mask was big enough in diameter to enable me, by looking straight down across my chest, to see a little area of floor at my feet—and what I saw was a nick in the stone, the size of a *marevidi* and red at the bottom.

"Señor Zorilla," I said, "why lead me so far and require of yourselves so much exercise when we could have come only a few steps diagonally across the passageway from my cell?"

"*El diablo,*" cried Zorilla in undoubted admiration, "this has not happened before in the seven years I have served the Cadiz tribunal. The young *señor* has a remarkable sense of direction."

"It is my one poor talent," I replied, sliding a foot over the nick that held the identifying scarlet globule.

The door opened, let me across the threshold, closed. Immediately the leather cone was lifted from over my head and my shackles were removed. I found myself in a huge kind of vault with machines and ropes and rings and pulleys and ladders and such an assortment of other things as I did not know existed for tormenting the flesh, the muscles, the bones.

At once I heard cryings out and groans and pleadings at the far end of the chamber where a man was stretched upon a rack. "Loosen me, *señores,*" he begged. "Loosen me a little that I may remember what I have to tell. Oh, my arms, my arms! I will tell all that is wanted, *señores.* Oh, oh, my arms are breaking!"

Zorilla conducted me about the room to examine the equipment. "This life-size metal animal, with a door in its side opening into a big oven is *el toro caliente,* the roasting bull," he explained. "Here are other heat instruments—hot pincers, hot irons for the feet, hot bricks for the stomach. Also, young *señor,* look at all these whips, and these *garrotes,* which with five turns will force the cords through the flesh to the bone, as you might press a string through a molded piece of butter."

He went on and on explaining the torture instruments of that awful room.

Then from the victim on the rack there came another torrent of piteous words: "Oh, oh, they are wrenching me to pieces! I have said that I did it. Release me. *Señores, señores,* have pity and let me go. They are killing me! They are tearing out my soul—I have lost my senses—order them to loosen me!"

"He complains loudly," remarked Zorilla. "Yet the rack is not our most rigorous stretching engine."

"A man's body won't lengthen like a worm's," put in the inquisitor. "If we stretch the young *señor* only one-fifth of a cubit longer, he will beg like the one on the rack yonder, beg in his agony for the privilege of telling the truth. So tell the truth now, Francisco Perez. Relate all you know of Montezuma and the Bible of Columbus. Let the secretary record your confession rather than your pleas, your anguish, your shrieks."

"Honorable *señor,*" I replied, "it is as I have said to you twice before. More than I have already told I cannot tell of Montezuma and the great admiral's Bible."

"Do I proceed?" inquired Zorilla.

"Proceed," said the inquisitor.

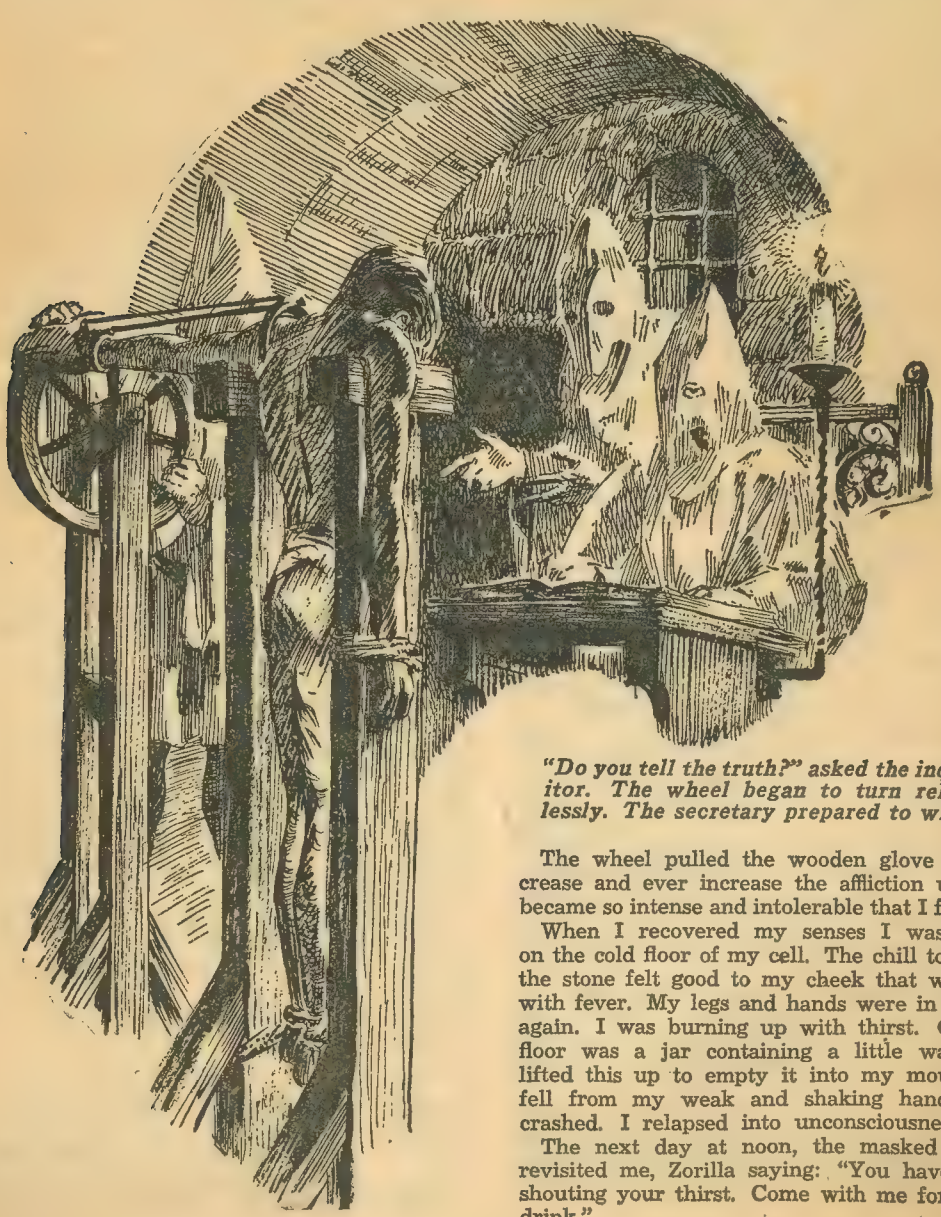
ZORILLA and the jailer lifted me several inches straight up from the floor and placed two high crutches under my armpits. My right arm, hanging down, was secured rigidly to the right crutch. My left arm was stretched

out horizontally at right angles to the body. The open hand was tightly enclosed in a wooden glove. Two iron bars ran from the glove to a firm attachment at the shoulder. My legs and waist were closely constricted by cords and straps. The only action finally left me was that of breathing.

"Do you tell the truth?" asked the inquisitor.

"I have told it."

The wooden glove, fastened to the rim of a wheel, began to move forward and over. As inch by inch it turned, I was pierced and repierced by pangs concentrating their intensity from the elbow to the shoulder of my left arm, but darting out convulsively all through my body. The secretary stood by in readiness to write. Once in my insupportable misery, as the wheel slowly, relentlessly revolved, a cry was almost forced out of me. I uttered *"Señores!"* and stopped as I saw a pencil go to paper in the secretary's hands that now seemed monstrously soft and white and pudgy. I made a fierce wager with punishment, and with the extremity of it, that I would not scream.



"Do you tell the truth?" asked the inquisitor. The wheel began to turn relentlessly. The secretary prepared to write.

The wheel pulled the wooden glove to increase and ever increase the affliction until it became so intense and intolerable that I fainted.

When I recovered my senses I was lying on the cold floor of my cell. The chill touch of the stone felt good to my cheek that was hot with fever. My legs and hands were in fetters again. I was burning up with thirst. On the floor was a jar containing a little water. I lifted this up to empty it into my mouth. It fell from my weak and shaking hands and crashed. I relapsed into unconsciousness.

The next day at noon, the masked group revisited me, Zorilla saying: "You have been shouting your thirst. Come with me for a big drink."

He led me away and soon I was once again in the torture chamber.

Zorilla took hold of my shoulders, but had to wait for the jailer at my feet to finish a prolonged attack of coughing. Then they lifted and laid me on a horizontal ladder that sloped downward and toward the head. To this I was fastened rigidly. Bits of wood plugged my nostrils. Five quart jars of water were at hand. An iron fork was put in my mouth to hold my jaws apart. One end of a long piece of linen cloth was pushed deep into my mouth. The other end was dropped into a water jar. Water trickled down the cloth, pushing the soaked and wadded fabric little by little into my throat. Efforts to swallow only dragged it farther in. This continued until I was almost suffocated and choked. Then Zorilla, seeing I was half dead, pulled the drenched cloth out and allowed me to breath again, while the inquisitor asked: "Is it so? Is it so, Francisco Perez, that you know about the admiral's Bible, that you know about Montezuma?"

Another jar of water brought no gurgling, strangled pleas for mercy, though my face was wet with the sweat of agony. Four jars at last stood beside me empty. Then I was returned to my dungeon so exhausted and fevered that a doctor was called. He stopped further torture for at least three days, and prescribed an hour's exercise each afternoon in the passageway.

I was turned loose by myself in the long, narrow hall, but the jailer made me swear as a Christian, a Spaniard, and an honest man not to hammer on any of the five cell doors or idle with any of the knobs. He took the fetters off my feet but not off my hands. He left my dungeon open and carefully locked the stair portal after him.

I WAS alone. There were the five prohibited doors, ten feet apart, sealed and silent. They fascinated me. I halted in front of each as I went down the hall. Which one was Pico behind? Five times, as I stopped, I wanted to pound with all my might, but I kept my pledge not to.

But what was there to stop me from trying the three doors on the opposite side? The one to the stairs I had just heard the jailer lock. The second one, leading, as I now knew, to the torture vault, was securely bolted. The third, at the end of the passageway, was so sure to be shut tight that I did not try it during the first ten minutes or so. Then I took hold of the knob. To my surprise, it turned. The hinges creaked loudly to make me feel uneasy, and I stood in a small room used for storage—coils of rope, a pile of lumber, odds and ends of metal, and several kegs of gunpowder. I left the place in disappointment, pulling the door to and again feeling alarm at the groans of its hinges.

As I walked back and forth a score of times, I kept thinking about that storage room. I thought particularly of the kegs. "B. Cruz, Cadiz" was burned into their heads. It was gunpowder that I may have helped to make.

My exercise time was now half up, maybe more. The jailer's return had to be considered. But I reopened the door, cringing at its noise. I took the heaviest of the metal pieces and knocked in the head of a keg, listening almost between each blow for the sliding bolt of a door. I worked fast to complete my errand before the jailer came back. I looked for a tinder box, for firesticks, for loose pieces of flint, for candles, but found none. I took the keg across the passageway and set it down at the end of my bed. My stagnant mind in dealing with the familiar gunpowder had come to life and hope.

The keg was well concealed behind the open door. The jailer would have had to lean over the foot of the bed in a peering, searching way in order to find it. He came coughing down the passageway and asked: "Have you not used your privilege?"

"Yes, *señor,* too much. From overwalking I became very tired before the hour's end."

"I will fasten on your leg shackles."

I stood up for this to be done.

"Señor," I said, "I have repented of my stubbornness, and request an audience with the inquisitor at seven o'clock tonight. Will you ask him to send me two sheets of paper and a pencil for writing out my confession—and a candle, *señor,* to light this black dungeon so I may write it here in privacy."

"The Inquisition's rule is to allow an audience to anyone wishing to confess. So you may expect the seven o'clock hearing to be granted. The other consent is very doubtful."

"Will you not urge its approval, *señor,* in my behalf? I would write nervously and badly in the judgment hall."

In this way I hoped to get hold of a burning wick to serve me far otherwise than as a light. Anyhow, at that time of the evening, the jailer would come for me with a candle. Could I get it from him by guile, or by force in my fettered condition, in case my dungeon confession was disallowed?

But when he came, he duly brought along writing materials. I had pulled the lower end of the mattress over the keg, and the blankets over all, apparently to clear a writing space on the masonry at the head of the bed. I asked him to set the candle down there, and to take off my handcuffs so I could use the pencil. Then I began to write, making a great show of pausing to think of suitable expressions. He had a fit of coughing so severe as to make the flame of the candle waver.

"Señor," I said, "unless you leave these damp vaults and get work to do in the sunshine, you will surely die."

He stood there meditating his doom, not alert enough to prevent my movements or even fully to understand them.

I grabbed the candle in my right hand. Then, as quickly as my leg fetters would allow, I went from the head to the foot of the bed. I backed against the door to close it without a gust to threaten the light, threw back the blankets and mattress with my free hand, and stood with the burning candle above the powder keg. I picked up a handful of gunpowder and threw it on the floor at his feet as one throws grain to chickens.

"Do what I say, *señor,*" I commanded. "I will set off this gunpowder unless you obey me."

"I will obey—in full—everything."

"Do the inquisitor and his assistants wait for us? Is the secretary there? Is Zorilla?"

"They are waiting, *señor,* including the secretary, but not Zorilla."

"Then take off these leg shackles and let us start. Go ahead of me. I will follow with the powder keg tenderly encircled by my left arm, and the candle held in my right hand. Go ahead and unlock the doors for me. Do not relock them or even close them after you. One false move and the whole keg will explode and you will be blown into a hundred pieces."

"Do not speak so, young *señor.* I will do all you say."

AT THE door of the judgment hall occurred the customary knocking and the threefold unlocking. "Back in without a word," I ordered. Thus I entered, unshackled, with the cowed jailer ahead of me. I went to my rightful place—the prisoner's stool—and set the keg down upon it. Then with the left hand thus made free I scooped up a handful of gunpowder, passed it under the eyes of the two constables, and tossed it forward for the black grains to sprinkle the judgment table.

"Gunpowder, *señores,*" I announced. "Do I set it off or do you now write out and sign and notarize an acquital for Francisco Perez and Pico of Hispaniola?"

"We must do as you ask," said the inquisitor.

"I must have it in writing. I must have it signed. I must have it stamped with the inquisition seal. For me. For my friend. Only the jailer will fetch him. If another man enters this room except him and the jailer, I will touch the candle flame to the gunpowder."

I lowered the candle over the keg. The whispering constable begged me in the name of mercy not to hold the flame so close.

"Your friend is not here," answered the inquisitor. "He has been transferred to Seville."

"Bring him," I repeated. "And get my money. Get his."

"But, *señor,* what of the tribunal's expenses in arresting you, trying you, imprisoning you—the carriage, your food, two doubloons for Zorilla?"

"Do you mean I pay Zorilla for torturing me?"

"It is customary, *señor,* and Zorilla's fee is a doubloon for each torture."

"Just the same, *señores,* bring me my money to the last *blanca.* Bring me the sailor's. How much is it?"

The secretary turned the pages of his account book and reported: "It is one thousand *marevidis* in money and an order on the queen's treasury, signed by Columbus, for one thousand *marevidis* more on account of wages during the third voyage."

"Bring it all here."

Several big chests, reinforced with iron bands, stood in a far corner of the hall. To one of these went the inquisitor, the prosecutor, and the secretary, each holding a key ready, for it also was trebly locked.

The inquisitor had returned to the table and the secretary and the prosecutor were taking out the money, when there was an official knock on the door.

"It is the jailer," said the inquisitor, "shall we open in the usual way?"

"Do so, but get my permission before admitting anyone."

He motioned to the secretary to come from the chests with his necessary third door key.

"Let him finish with the money first," I directed, "and bring it here. Those outside can wait."

I wanted to be completely ready so Pico and I could leave at once.

Soon the secretary approached me with two money pouches, my small one and Pico's very large one. He held them out to me gingerly at a distance.

"Put them in the keg." I said. "No, not on top, deep down, bury them. The gunpowder is clean. It won't soil your hands."

"Are you ready for us to unlock?" asked the inquisitor.

"Go ahead, but remember to report to me before anyone enters."

The door opened slightly. Through the aperture the inquisitor reached out his head, then shortly drew it back in, and explained to me: "It is the jailer and Pico of Hispaniola. Zorilla is also with them. He joined them while coming from duty at the torture chamber. Is he permitted to enter?"

It took me but a moment to make my decision. I picked up the powder keg, walked to a place at the left of the door, and gave the following instructions to the inquisitor: "Let all three of them enter, first Zorilla, then the jailer, both with hands above their heads so I can keep my eyes on them the whole way, beginning two paces outside the threshold. The sailor will come last. Throw the door wide open so I can see without. Any perfidy—and

"Any perfidy—and I will set fire to this powder keg as surely as there is an Inquisition in Spain."

I will set fire to the powder keg as surely as there is an Inquisition in Spain."

The jailer and torturer entered as directed and were still standing with uplifted hands when Pico came in, wearing his fetters. He took in the situation, and my control of it, no less in admiration than in astonishment.

"Muy magnifico," he cried. *"Muy magnifico!"*

He was leaning against the edge of the fully open door. In his exuberance and pride for what I had done, he pushed the great door to with a mighty bang. The breeze from its violent shutting came straight at my candle—and extinguished it.

(End of Part I)

ILLUSTRATED
BY
FRANK KRAMER

A STAR ON BRONZE

By GEORGES SURDEZ

ON A splendid afternoon of September, 1944, a young German gunner in a Mark Four Tank, rolling north through the central square of the little Burgundian town of Haubois, vented his sense of defeat and frustration by firing a Teutonic farewell, a few shots at random. Unwittingly, he brought the solution to a local problem, a serious problem which had started more than thirty years before and had stirred public interest from time to time for twenty years. But no one thanked him for his good deed, no one had the time or the opportunity, for those were busy days in Eastern France.

EIGHT long years before that gunner was born, on an equally splendid afternoon of August, 1914, Jacques-Louis Bertheau, who owned land three or four kilometers from Haubois, and was at the time a private of French Line Infantry through circumstances beyond his control, had become utterly fed up with war. He had found war even more tiring and purposeless than maneuvers had been during his two years of military training, with all sorts of additional annoyances due to enemy action.

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Rifles were cracking all around. The road was being shelled by the Germans and the village was burning in several places. It looked like the end of the world.

What was left of his company was plodding southward out of Belgium, away from Charleroi, where two days before a large French army had taken a thorough beating at the hands of the Kaiser's forces. The survivors were weary, bewildered men in garish uniforms —red trousers, blue coats reaching to the knees, heads crested by small kepis—an anachronistic procession duplicating with discouraging accuracy scenes of the debacle of 1870.

The realities of war had not matched the advance predictions. Several times, according to the principles of Colonel de Grandmaison, darling and prophet of the General Staff, Bertheau's regiment had charged with the bayonet, running forward with cheers, in perfect formation, bugles sounding the charge, taking advantage of what was known as 'The superior offensive spirit of the French soldier.' Long before reaching an enemy lurking behind cover, the trim sections had been hacked by shrapnel, blasted by high explosives, decimated by rapid rifle-fire, ripped and shredded by machine guns.

It did not matter that the Germans had suffered; Bertheau and his comrades had been licked. They felt weary, defeated, and betrayed. Even Captain Hulot, a professional officer, was by no means as confident and as buoyant as he had been less than three weeks before, when the battalions had marched from the barracks to the railroad station between masses of cheering civilians who tossed flowers and screamed, "On to Berlin!"

Private Bertheau was a large, fair man of twenty-six, tough as an ox, standing five feet ten inches and weighing over one hundred and seventy pounds. He was a farmer, accustomed to physical effort, and better off than most of his comrades, recently called from shops and offices.

But even he suffered. The thick, coarse cloth of the red trousers and blue capote seemed to absorb and store the summer heat, suspenders and straps, weighed by assorted equipment, sawed at his shoulders, the cartridge-pouches dug the broad belt into his loins and flanks, his feet were sore and he was hungry and thirsty. The churned dust coated his mouth and nostrils, the glare made his eyes ache, his body was filthy from the warm sweat of physical effort and heat, the cold sweats of utter terror, the clammy sweats of extreme fatigue that drenched his body when he had a chance to rest.

He thought of his comrades who had fallen, of those who had dropped easily, almost neatly, from bullets, of those who had been torn by explosions. He thought of his wife and of his eighteen-months-old son, of his little farm, of his cattle and fields. His plough horse had been requisitioned by the army and must be near the front also. Bertheau had liked his horse, and he tried not to think of what would happen to him.

"If this is war," said Marcelin, the Parisian next to him, "they know what they can do with it."

"Keep your tail up," Sergeant Larnier called out. He was a reservist, a village schoolmaster, and, doing his duty, supplied encouragement. "This is only the beginning. Wait until our reserves come up."

"Bravo, Sergeant," the other goaded him. "On to Berlin!"

"I'm telling you, it's only the beginning," the noncom repeated. "Come, you know we had to fight the Boches sooner or later. I am proud that I did not leave the job for my sons."

The right-thinking patter started the men laughing, but the captain trotted up on his big bay horse, and they walked on in silence. And on roads and across country, the beaten French Army was streaming southward, mixed at times with the gloomy columns of refugees. From time to time, a German plane soared overhead, very high—a Taube, marked with sinister black crosses. The infantrymen shot at it despite orders, wasting cartridges.

"Three weeks to go," a private said mockingly.

THREE weeks to go, for everyone knew that the war would last six weeks. Nations could not afford the cost of modern warfare for much longer. Bertheau thought that the way things were going, he might well be home inside a month, if he managed to keep alive. And from time to time, he was tempted to drop out of formation, to hide somewhere and make his way back to the farm. What good would it do for him to be killed? He was a farmer, not a soldier, not an adventurer. He was a married man with a child.

Then he felt shame. He was a man, a Frenchman. A true man did not quit his comrades, did not desert his regiment, did not betray his country. Even when his country sent him against a stronger enemy, better prepared, better armed. This was not the military promenade promised by the Fourteenth of July orators, to the Rhine and beyond. On the contrary, the Germans had overrun Belgium and were flooding into France.

"Come on, lads, a song!" the captain called out.

He was crazy, Bertheau thought. Songs were not for the beaten. Songs were for the gray masses rolling behind, the victors whom wise leaders had provided with the tools for victory. He had heard *them* singing in the distance, that night after the first clash. Now, a few voices rose, faltered, died away.

"The Colonials are coming," the officer promised.

Bertheau sneered like the rest. The Colonials! Could they take a bullet or a shell splinter better than plain, ordinary Frenchmen? What was

wrong with him and his comrades? Hadn't they tried a whole afternoon? The regiment had dropped seven hundred odd men in four hours . . .

There were frequent halts now. There was a jam ahead, a bridge to cross in the middle of the village, where the flood of retreat narrowed to pour to the far side. Bertheau felt his nerves tense, his stomach quivering—he was afraid. By turning his head toward the rumbling north, he could discern small white, fleecy puffs, like blinking flowers in an azure field: shrapnel bursts. The Boches were closing in, their field guns at work. Before long, the heavy stuff would catch up.

A bugle sounded, then another. Bertheau's company left the road and assembled in a ploughed field. The captain, perhaps thirty-six, a stocky, likable man, spoke from the saddle.

"My friends," he said, "our battalion has been assigned an important mission. We are to remain behind and protect our comrades for a few hours. The Boches are not far away—you will have a chance to see them very soon. This is the time to show them what we are made of—"

Bertheau did not yearn to impress the Germans, but he marched over the fields with the rest. The men did not seem very happy, headed for the shelling. They knew what it meant—they would be corpses or prisoners by dusk.

The company streamed through a small wood, emerged from the north-east fringe. They covered four hundred meters on the double, over a sloping field. Then several mounted silhouettes appeared, melted back into the woods before the startled men identified them as foes.

"They're close!" Captain Hulot called out. "Back to the fringe, and dig individual holes." He walked his horse after his company. But they were spotted already, and the first few shrapnel bursts broke overhead. Then, from the woods came rifle shots. The bullets were too high, they whined two feet overhead. Bertheau could see the leaves of the trees rustle.

"Somebody get the captain!" the little sub-lieutenant suddenly yelled.

Bertheau and Marcelin ran back. Hulot had gone down, caught under his horse, which was hurt and kicking. Bertheau shot the animal, and then he and the Parisian freed the officer, who tried to stand and collapsed again with a foolish smile of apology. Bertheau looked around. The company was inside the wood, digging. The tumult increased as French field pieces answered the German. Bertheau took one of the captain's arms, Marcelin grasped the other, and they half-dragged, half-carried him toward the line. Bullets started to stream around them.

"Get back, get back—it's an order," Hulot said.

"Not on your—" Marcelin started. Then he let go and sat down. He grinned up at Bertheau, then dropped on his side. His knees jerked up to cover his stomach. He stopped grinning as he died.

His feet were sore and he was hungry and thirsty. "If this is war they know what they can do with it."

BERTHEAU caught the officer around the body, lifted him over one shoulder. He had to shift his rifle. He broke into a staggering run, crossed the skirmish line and fell with his burden into the bushes. All around, the Lebel rifles were cracking. He knelt, turned his head and saw the Germans advancing in open order, still quite a distance away. They ran, dropped, rose, ran, fell, rifles at the trail. They moved surely, like a mechanism.

"Captain hurt?" the sub-lieutenant called over.

"I think his leg's busted and he's bleeding in the body."

"We'll be overrun here in fifteen minutes. He'll be taken, sure. Try to get him away, Bertheau."

"Yes, Lieutenant."

He went to pick up the captain. Hulot was spitting blood, and waved him away, mouthing protests. Bertheau lifted him easily, saying quietly, "Orders, Captain." And while Hulot still swore and protested, he carried him through the woods to the other side. The road was being shelled and the village near the bridge was burning in several places. Men were running about in disorder. It looked like the end of the world.

Bertheau laid the captain down and tried to get help. But the men passing by paid no attention to him, or threatened him with their weapons. He looked in vain for stretcher-bearers. Then, near a plank shack, he spotted a wheelbarrow. He rolled it to the officer's side, loaded the wounded man on it. Hulot had lost consciousness and groaned at every jolt. Meanwhile, Bertheau was worried—how would he prove he had left the line on an order from a superior?

"You're Bertheau," the captain said suddenly. His eyes had opened. It was strange to see him huddled, in that comic position, with his legs dragging over the shafts.

"Yes, Captain."

The officer's eyes were closed again. Inside ten minutes, they were at the road. Bertheau tried to stop the carts, shouting that he had a wounded officer, but nobody paid attention. There were great holes in the road's surface, where shells had struck, wounded men in the ditches and dead men everywhere. Bertheau wondered whether to go back to his company or remain where he was.

Two mounted officers arrived. One was the regimental adjutant, the other a staff captain. Bertheau presented arms, then indicated Captain Hulot. The adjutant took one look and then rode in front of an automobile, forcing it to stop. There were several men in it, wearing much gold braid, and they complained loudly, but the chauffeur got out and helped Bertheau place Hulot in the back of the machine.

"What's your name again?" the adjutant asked.

"Bertheau, Jacques, Fourth Company, Third Battalion—" The private added, "What do I do, *mon capitaine*?"

"I don't—well, I suppose, you rejoin your company."

And he and the staff man galloped down the road, which was almost cleared of traffic. Bertheau shouldered his rifle and started back across the field, but he had not covered three hundred yards when he ran into the company. It had shrunk perceptibly, but the sub-lieutenant was still there.

"What did you do with the captain, old man?" he asked.

"Put him in an automobile, Lieutenant."

"In an automobile, no less?" The officer smiled. "If I'm wounded, Bertheau, do the same for me, eh?" He turned to his men and nodded. "Come on."

They reached the road again and walked fast in a long file. Shrapnel and bullets hacked at the tall poplar trees. The men were longing for the bridge and safety, but a liaison officer just outside the village directed them to their battalion. The young captain of the Second Company was in command. He said the major had been killed, not five minutes before. He said that in fact it was safer here than in the village, for most of the shells passed over. There were individual holes and some men were putting a barricade across the road. There was some attempt at organization; cartridges, rations and water were distributed.

"How far are they?" someone asked.

"They can be seen with the glasses . . ."

"Glasses? Hell, look over there!"

"Sights, six hundred—sights, six hundred—"

The German infantrymen were coming forward in widely spaced squads, carefully. They oozed endlessly along the highway, out of the woods. The French seventy-fives, now unlimbered beyond the river, shelled them. Those Germans did not like shells. Their irregular lines would fluctuate, break away from a given zone at the first explosion, aware that three more would follow. Bertheau sought out the officers. One could identify them by the silhouette, slimmer of waist, thinner in the legs.

"Fire at will."

The Lebel rifles started to crack. Judging by the sounds, one might have thought not a German would be left. But only a few fell before the formations ducked to cover. Machine guns were needed, and the French had no machine guns in this spot. On the other hand, inside four minutes, the Germans had artillery support, and seventy-sevens began dropping shells on the survivors of the battalion. What with the dead, the wounded, the prisoners and the wise ones who had remembered an appointment somewhere, the battalion probably counted less than three hundred rifles.

Sections of Boches advanced alternately, like pistons. At times, they took a chance and rushed, but in open order. Bertheau, like the others, had tossed aside his knapsack and bag. He fired steadily, until the rifle burned his hands. Around him, men were killed or mangled. Every few seconds, somebody went. The sub-lieutenant caught one, then the schoolmaster sergeant. It was the end—they would all die here.

The voice of Marcelin, the dead Parisian, kept ringing in his head, "If this is war—" And something else he had said at the very start, "The fool-killing machine's going, and not one sucker will be left." And there was nothing to do but stick here and use up cartridges. Nothing else to do, nowhere to go.

Then machine guns opened on them from behind. The enemy had circled, slid between

them and the village. The straggling line broke at last, and those who could run, ran.

Bertheau leaped over a low stone wall, sprawled. The detonations, the surprise, had stunned him. He heard shouts in German nearby, and drew out his bayonet, with a vague idea of making a last stand. But his fingers were all thumbs and when the steel at last clicked into place, there were two sweating Boches standing over him, covering him with their rifles. He dropped the gun and lifted his hands.

He was a prisoner. He believed that the war and his troubles were over, that he would be home within a few weeks.

TWO years later, on a splendid afternoon in July, 1916, Jacques Bertheau drove a heavy cart, hitched to two powerful horses, along a road in Poland. He was still a prisoner of war, but down on the records as Celestin Chantrel, ex-artilleryman. He had had to change his name because he had strangled a man.

That had been in Belgium, on a warm September evening, during his first attempt to escape and go home. Bertheau had got out of a railroad station by climbing a fence, and a German sentry had been in his way. By a process of elimination, the Germans knew that it was Bertheau who had killed one of the guards, but they had never learned that Chantrel and Bertheau were the same man. Bertheau had been recaptured inside a week, less than fifty miles from his starting point, in a routine round-up of escaped prisoners, French, Belgian and English. The woods swarmed with escaping prisoners in those days.

Bertheau did not know whether he resembled the real Chantrel or not. The general description fitted. The Belgian farmer who had supplied him with papers had told him that Chantrel would not show up, that he had died of wounds while in hiding, and was buried in a ditch. Fortunately, pay-books did not carry fingerprints in those days.

As Chantrel, Bertheau had been put on a train for Germany. And, as Chantrel, he had not been sent to an ordinary camp but to a punishment colony for men who had tried to escape, in the marshes of Westphalia. He had had no mailing privileges there, and had emerged after five months, fifty pounds lighter. Placed in the ordinary camp at Cassel, he had not risked writing home. The German organization impressed him with its thoroughness, and he was sure that Red Cross cards were checked and counter-checked. Furthermore, his wife or one of his brothers might put something in an answer that would tip off the enemy. If identified, he would be shot, and quite legally: from the German viewpoint, he had committed murder.

Bertheau did not think of himself as a particularly daring man. But he had the homing instinct of an animal, could not resign himself. After three months in ordinary camp, he had escaped with two comrades. On this occasion, he had come within a few yards of safety, separated from Holland only by barbed wire charged with electricity. Then a patrol had found him, and he had served thirty days in solitary confinement, during which time he had consumed seven bowls of weak soup and nothing else. When he had come out, he could circle his biceps with his fingers.

The Germans, always considerate, had shipped him to a reprisal camp on the Baltic Sea, near Memel. There, for six months, he had filled sand bags in the dunes and emptied them into the sea. He had been fed a bowl of barley soup and a slice of black bread a day. Sores had broken out on his body, he had lost some of his teeth. Then he had been returned to an ordinary camp, guaranteed as cured of the wish to escape. In transit, he had leaped from a moving train, dragged himself on sprained ankles for a few hundred miles, living on raw vegetables, crawling nights and hiding days. That time, he had almost reached the Danish border.

Two sweating Boches stood over him, covering him with their rifles.

To make sure that they had something left to punish, the Germans had hospitalized him for a month. Throughout his captivity, he had been beaten now and again with gun butts and whips; he had been kicked and punched and

jabbed with bayonets. His hair had started to fall out, his face was wrinkling. At the age of twenty-eight, he looked a poor forty-five.

When able to stand, he had been shipped off again, to a special reprisal *kommando* in the Forest of Blizna. There he was served a superb menu of beet or barley soup and mouldy bread. The work was hard, chopping down trees.

It was in that forest camp that Bertheau had met a man from Haubois, captured at Verdun in February, 1916. The fellow had not recognized him for a long time, but was finally convinced and gave news. One of Bertheau's brothers had been killed in Champagne, in September, 1915. Another was home permanently, with a bad leg. Marguerite, he said, was fine and so was his son. Bertheau had worried and decided to try to escape again. It seemed he had family affairs to attend to!

Escape. There were two ways of escaping. One was to reach the Russian lines. But that was risky, as the Germans were more alert close to the front. The other method was to obtain a disguise and cross the whole of Germany to the Swiss border. It was hard, but it had been done.

To obtain relative freedom for preparations, Bertheau had volunteered to drive a cart to the artillery positions immediately behind the front. There was some danger to this, as the Russians occasionally shelled the roads and some of their cavalry patrols seeped through. The Cossacks asked no questions, shot everybody at sight.

The cart hauled beams and timbers of the various kinds used in semi-permanent field fortifications. It was pleasant work, and once one was away from guards, in contact with fighting soldiers, one was given an occasional meal. But a prisoner who volunteered was scorned by the others. Bertheau lost his friends, as he could not explain his purpose.

What with one thing and another, he had built himself to one hundred and forty pounds. Weight had importance, because weight meant additional strength and endurance. Also, one item at a time, he had acquired an almost complete German uniform. He had stolen a paybook. There was a band stitched around the sleeve of his tunic, with the initial F. K. 418, for "French Kommando." But that could be ripped off. While Bertheau, like many Frenchmen, was a poor linguist, he knew a few essential phrases by heart. And it was not so much a question of deceiving suspicious questioners as of avoiding questions. In a private's uniform, he could travel on trains . . .

ALWAYS with this end in view, he had made a friend of a German officer, a captain of artillery. Fabeck had been a purchasing agent for a Berlin hotel and had visited Burgundy often. He proclaimed that, though a reserve officer and a patriotic German, he had a weakness for the French. They were a light-hearted people who should never make war: too brave and gay and inefficient. Captain Fabeck would have been startled and hurt if he could have read Bertheau's mind, for the prisoner planned for a while to cut his throat and steal his uniform. With a captain's tunic, one could travel far. Then he had reasoned that as a captain he would have to travel first class, which was expensive, and that civilians might notice his accent. But Fabeck was still good for a piece of sausage, a piece of cheese, a loaf of bread and an occasional mark.

Fabeck's position consisted of six one hundred and fifty millimeter pieces in separate pits. The gunners had constructed cabins for themselves, real little chalets for the officers. It was a very pretty spot under the firs, resembled a Bavarian beer garden, with rustic benches and tables in the open. The sector was relatively quiet, and the soldiers were happy, away from the systematic death of the Western Front.

When Bertheau drove up with his load of lumber, a sergeant yelped orders and a dozen privates came to unload. The noncom gave the driver a cigarette. These fellows had seen Bertheau so often in the past three months that they had almost forgotten he was a prisoner. They had given him the boots he wore, the pants, the tunic, because they had tired of looking at his rags. In a way, they had made him a pet.

Captain Fabeck came down a lane through the bushes, his flat cap pushed back, his tunic unbuttoned. He smoked a cigar and held one hand in his pocket.

"Hy, Celestin, how goes it?" he asked cordially. He liked to show off his French before the privates. Bertheau stiffened to attention, and saluted clumsily.

"At ease, my lad, at ease! Don't try to be military! Doesn't suit the French. Songs, amusements, yes. War, nonsense!" He had a double chin and moved his neck like a turkey. "Bah, it isn't your fault, Celestin."

"Captain, may I ask a favor?"

"Two. Ask."

"Can I wash up?"

"Sure. I'll send a guard with you."

Bertheau tossed his tunic on the seat of the cart. A gunner picked up his carbine and led the prisoner to a wide brook under the trees. The Frenchman stripped and swam about. This was even better than food. The soldier sat on the bank, half asleep, and Bertheau, obsessed by the idea of escape, saw how easy it would be to kill him and take his gun. But there was the front line somewhere ahead, occupied by infantry. Could he get through?

Then the sentry leaped to his feet. There was the crackling of rifles in the distance, and it seemed to be coming nearer. Not far away, field pieces went into action.

"Hi, Celestin, how goes it?" Captain Fabeck asked cordially when Bertheau drove up with his load of lumber.

"Get dressed. Quick."

The soldier had grown sullen, his eyes glared. Bertheau obeyed, and they headed for the battery position on the double. But when they emerged into the clearing, the Russians were already there. The gunners were lined up, their hands in the air. Three or four bodies, among them that of the young lieutenant, showed there had been resistance. The man who guarded Bertheau tossed his carbine into the thicket, held up his palms.

The Russians, cavalrymen, did not look like Cossacks as the prisoner imagined them. They wore little flat caps with vizors, brown tunics and azure trousers. One of the officers wore a white blouse on which a row of crosses glistened. He halted before Captain Fabeck, and leaned from the saddle to question him in German. Two Russian riders herded the sentry and Bertheau toward the others, at the end of their long lances.

"I'm French, I'm French," Bertheau called

out. One of the riders rapped him hard over the head with the butt of a lance. But Bertheau dodged and kept shouting: "French, prisoner, French—"

A Russian officer rode close. He was very young, eighteen at the most, very blond, his face was smooth and pink as a girl's. But his shoulders were broad, his waist slender. There were two enamel-and-gold crosses on his tunic.

"You are French?" he asked, after quieting the soldier.

"Yes, Lieutenant. Prisoner since 1914."

"Why are you in a German uniform?"

"There's the band on my tunic. On my tunic, F. K."

"Where's the tunic?"

"On the cart, over there—" Bertheau pointed and realized that the cart was gone. And his tunic with it. He never learned when or why. "Anyone here can tell you I am a French prisoner—"

"And you are, of course, an Alsatian?" The young man smiled faintly. "I know the trick. But really, your French is not good enough to try it."

"My French not good enough?"

"You have an odd accent," said the young Russian. He spoke perfect French, with a slight lilting accent. Bertheau spoke like what he was, a farmer from Burgundy.

"I tell you I'm French!"

"Come," the Russian resumed, in a lower voice, "if we believe you French and find you in German uniform, you must be shot. You don't want that to happen?"

"No, Lieutenant. My tunic . . . I . . .you must—"

"Where are your papers?"

"Held in camp. I'm on Kommando here."

"Unwatched?"

"Volunteer for front line work."

"Volunteer? Against your allies?" The young officer called out to his senior in Russian. The other replied shortly. Two riders alighted, and searched Bertheau. They found nothing at first, then one felt the pay-book hidden in the lining of the trousers. He cut through the cloth to get it out, handed it to the officer.

"Wilhelm Renlinger? Doesn't sound French." The young man shrugged, smiled, and asked the German noncom nearby in his own tongue "How long has Renlinger been with your battery?"

"Seven months, Herr Lieutenant," the other snapped back without hesitation.

There was fighting not a mile away, no one could be sure of living an hour longer. Yet the whole lot of Germans broke into laughter at the sergeant's answer. It was putting one over on the Frenchman! The Russian officer yielded to a broad grin himself.

"Well, it might have worked!" he handed the booklet back to Bertheau, gingerly held between two fingers. "Here you are, my friend. But I'd advise you not to try clowning with other people. You might easily get shot."

THE German prisoners—there were close to a hundred of them—started toward the Russian lines on the double, herded by the lances. After a while, Bertheau contrived to drop back beside the captain, who was puffing.

"Captain Fabeck, won't you help me?"

"Can't very well, old man. You'd make one more man against us, you know." Fabeck was grinning with amusement. "Oh, don't make such a face! Once we're clear of the fighting line, you can no doubt get in touch with a French consul or someone. I'll tell you what—those swine killed my orderly. You can stay with me, as my servant. You'll be more comfortable and I can practice my French."

"Captain, I—"

"Listen, you stole Renlinger's pay-book!"

"He's in the hospital, Captain."

"I know it well enough. But it's a theft. You crook"—the German captain puffed and laughed—"you were planning to escape! And you told me you were so satisfied, too!"

Captain Fabeck seemed satisfied with his own lot. The party had to hurry late that afternoon, for the Russians were retiring after their raid in strength. It was after dark when the captured prisoners were marched into a barbed-wire enclosure. Bertheau started to shout as he stood in line for the first counting, announcing that he was French, an escaped prisoner.

"Does anyone speak French?" he pleaded.

An officer and two armed soldiers came up to him on the long line. "I speak French. What do you want?" Bertheau explained his plight.

"All right. Nothing can be done here to verify your story. You'll have a chance later to make a written statement. Meanwhile, keep your mouth shut."

"I insist upon being taken before—"

"Shut up!" The officer shrugged, and as Bertheau started to protest again, nodded to one of his men, who quietly reversed his gun and struck the troublesome prisoner on the side of the head. Bertheau sank to his knees. The officer was walking away when he rose, but one of the soldiers had remained. The Frenchman resumed his place in the line and when the German noncom called the roll, answered to Renlinger.

The next few days were a nightmare of marching under escort. The food was somewhat better than Bertheau had had for years, cabbage soup and black bread every day. He tried to identify himself as a Frenchman, but was rebuffed. Almost anyone in the German Army who could assemble twelve words in French claimed to be an Alsatian or a Lorrainer to obtain better treatment. The Russians were weary of that.

Bertheau marched, and rode in cattle cars. He answered to the name of Renlinger because that was the only way to be fed.

Before long, old units were broken up, and soon only four or five men remained of those Bertheau had known at the battery. The newcomers thought that he was pretending to be mad, because he spoke in broken German and insisted that he was French. Bertheau never knew where he was. The station signs were in Russian, and the German names supplied by his companions were without meaning.

The Germans took to mimicking him, repeating his shouts to employees and guards, "What's this place? Is there a French consul here? I must speak to the French Consul."

From there to nicknaming him 'The French Consul' was a short step. At times, Bertheau thought he would go mad. Every step, every turn of a wheel, took him further and further from his home, from Haubois in Burgundy.

BERTHEAU reached Siberia. At first, he was stationed on the Eastern slope of the Ural Mountains, then he shuttled awhile between Central Siberia and Far Eastern Siberia. He learned spoken German rather well, and acquired a workable knowledge of Russian. Expert historians are still puzzled by what happened in Siberia between 1917 and 1925. Bertheau, with the ordinary education of a French country boy, never understood any of it. There were times when he was a soldier without weapons, other times when he was a prisoner and carried a rifle.

The first year had a semblance of order and logic. He was Wilhelm Renlinger, German artilleryman, prisoner of the Russians. As such, he was sent out of the main camp to do lumbering. He tried to write to the nearest French Consul, and to write home. His cards were returned to him persistently, until someone managed to make him understand the reason: cards had to be written in the native language of the prisoner, or in Russian, to facilitate censorship. Technically, his native language was German, which he could not write. That was discouraging.

One camp commander consented to listen to him. He nodded and smiled, and Bertheau-Renlinger found himself transferred to an officers' camp as a servant. There a good natured Bavarian captain consented to help him get in touch with a Frenchman. There was a wait of two months, before Bertheau and several others were summoned to the office, where two gentlemen in French uniforms interviewed them—he was not the only one who claimed French nationality.

"Your name?"

"Jacques-Louis Bertheau."

That much was simple. But when he started explaining why he was Wilhelm Renlinger, because he had been prisoner of war Celestin Chantrel, his listeners grew confused. Bertheau was not certain that he would be removed immediately from among Germans and there were Germans listening, so he would not relate that he had killed a sentry in Belgium. And the dreary listing of the various camps and stations he had been in as a prisoner of the Germans did not help. It was all true, yet it had a fantastic sound.

"Now," one of the Frenchmen suggested kindly, "pull yourself together. Think hard. We understand your mind is troubled. Who are you, really? Give us your address in France. Is your name Chantrel or Bertheau?"

"Chan—I mean Bertheau, *mon capitaine*."

"How long did you live in France, my friend?"

"All my life. Until the war, I was never out of the country." Bertheau's patience snapped. "Can't you tell that I am as French as you are?"

"If we could, that would simplify matters."

Bertheau waited for four months after that, and finally received a letter, addressed to Prisoner-of-War Wilhelm Renlinger, informing him that information sent by the French Government was that Private Bertheau, Jacques-Louis,

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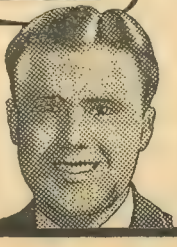

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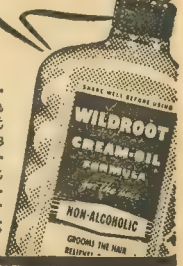

had been killed in action on August 23, 1914! The mayor of Haubois had confirmed the army records. In consequence, nothing further could be done.

He was still dazed by this when the big smash-up of 1917 occurred. The German and Austrian prisoners of war were considered free men, as Russia had signed a separate peace with the Central Powers. Some of them were repatriated, others refused, among them Bertheau, who had no reason to go back to Germany. The moment he entered that country he would be returned to some reprisal camp. For, even though the French refused to acknowledge him as a Frenchman, the Germans would know very well that he was one!

When the camp in which he resided disintegrated, he joined a band of some two hundred men, mostly Germans, under a Prussian officer. He was given a rifle and equipment, marched blindly here and there, fought when he had to. He was never quite sure whether he was with the Revolutionists or against them. For that matter, the men with him knew little more. In those days, one had to be connected with a military outfit to be fed. He witnessed a number of executions, never certain whether Bolsheviks or Tsarists were being shot.

ONE night in December, 1918, near the railroad station at Omsk, he saw two French officers. He accosted them and told his story. They told him that the war against Germany was over, that France had won. But they expressed fear that if he ever got back to France he would be tried for desertion. He protested that he had not deserted from troops sent to Russia, that his strange tale was true. They then said that they could do nothing officially, that they were on a mission to organize a front in Siberia against Bolshevism. They gave him a little money and an address in town.

The following day, upon presenting a card on which one of the men had scribbled a few lines, he was enrolled in a unit of Rumanian soldiers, bound for Vladivostock. He reached that port after spending some three months on

Bertheau started to weep as he told his story to the bearded man.

trains. It was a queer voyage. Some of the stations were occupied by Czechoslovaks, others by Japanese, some by American troops.

In Vladivostock, it was discovered that he was neither Rumanian nor a Czech, hence not subject to repatriation. He could not be classified as a Pole, and could not admit being a German. There were French troops in the city, but he was turned away: no volunteers were being accepted. An unattached man not only could not get food but was in danger of being picked up and shot as a spy. After two days' vain pleading with the French, growing desperate for food and safety, he enlisted in a miscellaneous outfit, uniformed and armed by the British Government, and boarded a train bound west to join General Gayda's forces.

He fought against the Bolsheviks during the whole of 1919. In 1920 and 1921, he belonged to a band of armed men who were in reality bandits. Then he found himself serving the Bolsheviks. During those years, he was wounded twice, held the rank of sergeant for six weeks, and spent some miserable months in hospitals. In 1923, one of his comrades, a Siberian, decided to go home, and invited him along.

Bertheau then worked long months on a farm. That period was not unhappy. He did not know exactly where he was and did not care. His memories of home had grown very dim, he had wearied of the effort. During the spring of 1924, he rode to the nearest village with his comrade. They started to drink at the inn. When he got drunk, Bertheau became homesick, he sang French songs.

On this occasion, as soon as he had finished his first song, a big, red-bearded man in a nondescript uniform rose from a nearby table, came over to slap him on the shoulder.

"Eh, you're French! What are you doing here, fellow?"

Bertheau found some difficulty speaking his own language. He started to weep as he told his story. The other watched him, nodded from time to time. He told Bertheau that he was French also, born in Auvergne. He had been in the navy and had participated in the Black Sea rebellion. Then he had joined the Bolsheviks. He was not sorry, but pitied Bertheau.

"You want to go home?" he asked.

"Do I! But how can I? No money, no papers."

"I can fix that."

"You?" Bertheau laughed nervously.

"Me. I'm on a mission here, but I go back to Europe next week. I can take you along. I don't want to boast, but I have pull. I can get you as far as Sweden. After that, it's up to you. Right?"

"If you're kidding, I'll—"

"Why would I kid you? You poor sap, you've taken a lot!"

It took a month longer for Bertheau to get out of Russian territory. Then, miraculously, he found himself in Sweden, bearing an old passport made out to one Mortier, Auguste-Raoul, businessman, born in Toulouse, France. Coached by his red-bearded friend, he went to the French Consulate and did not make the mistake of telling the truth. He said he had been stranded in Russia throughout the Revolution and had lost his investments.

The consulate granted him a visa, supplied transportation to France via Copenhagen. Bertheau was even put in touch with a charitable organization dealing with just such cases, which provided him with decent clothing and a little pocket money.

In July, 1924, almost ten years after the mobilization for the Great War, Bertheau crossed the Belgian border into France.

BERTHEAU reached Haubois by bus on a market Thursday.

He had expected to feel bewildered and lost, but even after the long years he felt at home. People looked at him, smiled and said hello, as if they knew him. Then he remembered that French country people were polite even to strangers. He went into the Inn of the Gold Sheaf and ordered a bite to eat. The place was not changed inside, but a filling-station had been added outside. The bread, the cheese, the wine, all tasted exquisite. For the first time, really, Siberia sank out of his mind. The proprietor of the inn, Lucien Costal, was behind the zinc bar. He'd grown fatter and balder, that was all.

A man passed by, elbowing through the crowd. Bertheau caught sight of his face and gasped. Their eyes met and the fellow turned, sat down and offered his hand.

"Well, Jacques!"

"So you know me?"

"Right away." Bertheau's older brother Jean was more pleased than startled. "Look, Jacques, we better go elsewhere to talk . . ." He indicated Costal the inn-keeper with a lift of the chin. "He's got a weak heart, you know. That's why he wasn't mobilized, remember?"

"Yes, sure. But why would—"

"Why?" Jean held up both palms expressively. "Why? He married Marguerite, that's why. And seeing you, all of a sudden—"

"Look here," Jacques Bertheau snarled, "he marries my wife and I have to be careful of his heart? I'll—"

"That's a mean spirit," Jean stated piously. He shouted to Costal to put everything on his slate, and dragged his new-found brother out. He led him to a stall in the market place, where another Bertheau brother, Alphonse, was disposing of butter and vegetables. Alphonse embraced Jacques warmly and sent a boy to locate Gregoire, the youngest. Gregoire had been fourteen when Jacques left, and he had grown to be the largest in the tribe.

"I've got your old farm," he said casually, "so

Costal held a chair ready and yelled that he had a weak heart and could not fight.

maybe you better come with me. You'll feel more at home there." Gregoire brought out a handful of bills. "Got any dough? You're welcome, you know."

"Look," said Alphonse, "maybe we'd better go and see Monsieur Lemaigre." Jacques Bertheau looked at him curiously: Lemaigre was the attorney for the family.

"That can wait until tomorrow," Gregoire declared. "Tonight, everybody comes over to my place, and we'll have a celebration. You, Jean, better tip off Costal and Marguerite. Tell them to come over if they like."

It was a memorable celebration. Jacques Bertheau, returned from Siberia, was at the head of the table. The brothers were there with their wives and children. Neighbors dropped in, bottles were produced by the dozen. From time to time, the gigantic Gregoire slapped his brother on the back hard enough to jar his teeth. All were pretty tipsy when Marguerite, grown fat and red, but still attractive, rushed in and flung her arms around her husband. Lucien Costal, looking a little embarrassed and pale, shook hands.

"You know how these things are," he said lamely.

"Sure, it's nobody's fault," Bertheau admitted generously.

Marguerite had brought Jacques' son, a leggy youngster going on twelve, who suffered an embrace stiffly. There were four other children, two girls and two boys, but they were Costals. Everyone strove to be gay and casual, but all understood many things to be settled.

Lawyer Lemaigre, on the following afternoon attended the family reunion at Jacques Bertheau's old farm. There were bottles on the tables on this occasion also, but no one drank much. The three Bertheau brothers who had been home had purchased the farm formerly owned by Jacques from his supposed widow Marguerite, who had turned the money over to her second husband, or supposed husband, to buy the inn at Haubois. Everything had been done legally, with notarized deeds, so that the brothers felt that it was not their responsibility to settle with the returned man, but Costal's.

Costal, on the other hand, declared that he had taken the money in good faith, as a dot of his wife, and that if he had to pay back, he might as well go into bankruptcy. He had four children of his own and before he saw them stripped, he would go to law. He then made a remark about people who took their time about getting home and did not even bother writing. Bertheau grew angry and started to curse the inn-keeper, yelling that in any case, Marguerite was his wife and how did he, Costal, like that?

Costal said Marguerite was *his* wife, and the woman, when asked her opinion, said she loved Jacques and always would love him, but that she had four children and a husband who was very nice to her, and that she would stay at the inn.

"How about it?" Bertheau asked Lemaigre. "Whose wife is she, according to law?"

"Well, I'm not sure, exactly," the old lawyer replied. "According to the Law of June 25, 1919, concerning sailors, soldiers and civilians declared missing during the War, a husband regains his wife if he reappears within a period of two years. At the end of that time, he must start action to have the declaration of his death annulled. But in this case, Jacques Bertheau was not reported missing, he was reported dead officially. It will be harder to annul that than if he had been declared dead after being missing two years."

"I want my farm back," Bertheau insisted. He punched the table. "Look, nobody asked me a thing. I'm just put into the army—I do my duty. So I lose my wife and my property?"

"Do be reasonable, Jacques," Gregoire protested. "The farm is mine, my share of our inheritance. You know it doesn't matter who owns it—you can live there as long as you wish. What would you want us to do, anyway?"

"Pool the three parts together," Jacques Bertheau said, "then divide four ways."

"And we'd have presented your wife and her husband with the money for the inn?" Alphonse laughed. "Not likely. You get her to return that money to us, and we make a new arrangement. After all, it was because she is your wife we had to buy up the little farm that was really our property."

"Will you sign notes, Costal?" Jacques Bertheau asked.

"Certainly not. I don't owe anybody anything."

"So you get my woman and my money, just like that?"

"You could have written, couldn't you?"

Bertheau lost his temper, and his brothers had to hold him. Costal backed against the wall, holding a chair ready, and yelling that he had a weak heart and could not fight.

The conference broke up with the understanding that Lemaigre would have the death of Jacques Bertheau annulled in some fashion, after which he could sue for whatever he thought was coming to him. Jacques went back to his old farm as a guest, lived with Gregoire and his family. His own son was a little frightened of him and plainly avoided him on the streets of the town. Jacques worked, and his young brother was not niggardly with money. So, on market days, Jacques would get a little drunk.

HE HAD been home but four days when the mayor of Haubois, Monsieur Prouvay, came with the constable. He informed Jacques Bertheau that he was liable to arrest for travelling under forged papers. As an old friend, he would do nothing but pick up the Auguste-Raoul Mortier passport and dispose of it. He added that Jacques had better get some genuine papers. The national gendarmes, a brace of them, visited Jacques two days later, and warned him to obtain a card of identity. The mayor could not give him a card as Jacques Bertheau, for the town records listed Jacques Bertheau as dead, so he issued him a card headed, "Claims to be Mortier," which satisfied the police.

Lawyer Lemaigre reported that he was having trouble establishing the fact that Jacques Bertheau had not been killed. Local testimony was not sufficient, as the regimental records showed him among the identified killed. Perhaps if Bertheau could produce some affidavits of people who had known him in the regiment things would go better.

So Bertheau went to the headquarters of his old regiment and saw the new colonel. Unfortunately, practically all of his company had been wiped out—lieutenant, sub-lieutenant, sergeants. Most of them killed in August, 1914.

"The captain is alive, quartered near Paris," the officer said. "But it is impossible that he remembers you well enough to identify you positively as the Jacques Bertheau who served in his company."

Bertheau almost shouted with joy, "I know he will!"

He went to see Hulot, in a small garrison town not far from the capital. Hulot was now a colonel and sported a fine white mustache. He received Bertheau cordially, as a member of his original company in the bitter days of Belgium. But he was merely polite until Bertheau mentioned the wheelbarrow. Then he grew excited and shook his hand warmly.

"I'd have been taken, sure, and probably have died!" Hulot sobered. "You must be the man—who else would know of the wheelbarrow? I owe you more than life. I will sign the affidavit, but that hardly pays my debt. Look here, Jacques, aside from this, what can I do for you? I'm not a rich man, but anything I have. . ."

"That's all, thank you so much, Captain—I mean Colonel."

"Say 'Captain'—it makes me feel young." Hulot smote his head. "I have an idea!" He gripped Bertheau's hand. "You'll see later."

Bertheau returned home and handed the affidavit over to the lawyer. As soon as he was admitted to legal existence, he could start suit to recover from his supposed widow and her present husband. Before long, he contracted a rural sort of an engagement to a buxom girl on a nearby farm, and it was decided that he would obtain an annulment of his former marriage as soon as possible, so that they could buy a little farm together.

No one who had known Jacques Bertheau in Siberia would have recognized him after six months at home. The excellent food and the tonic wines of Burgundy had filled out his frame and colored his cheeks. His morale was improving fast. His growing son grew to be proud of him and often sought his company. When he showed up at the inn, Marguerite made a fuss over him, which infuriated Costal. What fun it would be to collect from that fat slacker. Moreover, he rather enjoyed his grim prestige as a man who had been known for years as officially dead!

But Lawyer Lemaigre reported that matters were hard to conclude. "Oh, I know, I know what people are telling you, that I'm being paid to hold you back! That is not so. There *are* laws to cover your case, but there was a time limit . . . And there's that slip you made in Sweden, by not at once declaring your true identity at the consulate. It's very hard to explain. For one thing, you were not reported missing before declared dead, you were reported killed, and the death was so certified in the town records. I have had two notices already that Bertheau, Jacques-Louis, was killed in August, 1914 and that you must be an impostor."

After months of this, Bertheau became restive again. There were evenings when nothing would ease his mind except a few drinks. He would bicycle to the town from the farm, visit certain cafés patronized by rough, if honest, chaps—poachers and drifters. They had known war, sickness, wounds and prison, and they understood a fit of *cafard*.

JULY, 1925 came, and the town of Haubois prepared for the national holiday on the Fourteenth. The council had voted the erection of a monument to the dead of the Great War (1914-1918). It could do no less, as every community of any size in the region had one. The sub-prefect was to attend, and the deputy representing the district in Paris, and, of course, the mayor. The volunteer firemen would be in full uniform, and a picked detachment of veterans would pass in review. These last could be seen drilling at twilight, some distance from the town. Alphonse Bertheau was one, but Jacques was turned down because his official status was not clear.

The great day dawned, and the ceremonies started. Bands blared *La Marseillaise, La Madelon* and so on. Jacques Bertheau, who had survived greater trials than any of the others, thought he was entitled to wear a victory ribbon, but the constable called him on that when he walked into town. Of course, Bertheau would not take it off—everyone knew he had been in the army. But the argument put him in a bad mood, and he drank a lot of white wine before drifting to the central square to see the monument unveiled.

The sun was hot, and Bertheau was with a group of men who hated thirst and had brought bottles. They sang so loudly that the people on the platform in the center of the square looked at them with disapproval several times.

A touching, impressive little ritual had been devised for the unveiling. Just as the monument, with its bronze plaques bearing the names of the fallen, was stripped and exposed, there was a roll of drums and the sound of bugles, and the mayor, in the name of the community which had bred them, called the roll of the dead. A big, grizzled veteran, who bore the military medal and a war cross with seven stars and two palms, answered each time in a thunderous voice:

"Dead on the field of Honor!"

The relatives of the dead, their memories stirred anew after the long years, shed silent tears. Some of those names exploded in mothers' hearts with lacerating force. White-haired fathers would spit out a cigar stub, clench their teeth, and look fiercely into space, jaws quivering.

"Abelier, Theophile, Fourth Chasseurs?"

"Dead—on—the field of Honor!"

Bertheau was very moved himself. Some of those names fitted boys he had gone to school with, brought memories flooding back. No, they were not forgotten; no, they had not died in vain!

"Bertheau, Henri, corporal, infantry?"

"Dead—on—the field of Honor!"

"Bertheau, Jacques-Louis, line infantry?"

"Dead—on the—"

His brother's name had shocked him into attention; his own name startled him, and in quick, sudden indignation, his voice covered that of the veteran—"Alive! Present!"

". . . field of Honor," concluded the veteran, uncertainly.

All eyes had turned toward Bertheau, who glared back. Didn't he have a name, wasn't he alive? And he suddenly realized that his name was there, on the monument, gilt bronze letters and all, proclaiming that he was dead, for all the world to see! Naturally, for the monument had been prepared according to the official list of the dead! The constable had quietly come nearer.

"Listen, Jacques, you try to mess up things—"

"I've a right to say I'm alive when I'm alive! Am I Jacques Bertheau or not, you old fool?"

"Try to be polite. Try to be decent." The constable, who had known Bertheau since he was six or seven, lowered his voice. "There's a good surprise for you. It's on the monument."

The deputy from Paris was speaking again. He had visited the quiet sectors of the front with committees of politicians, so he felt justified in intoning, "We who faced the hot metal of the enemy and knew the horrors of the trenches—"

After a while, he extended a white hand toward the tablets. "And those names you read are as French as the juice of the grapes which goes into our famous wines—bare your heads, open your hearts when you pass by, for they were Frenchmen! And you will see that after the name of one of the humblest, a poor farmer who tilled the soil, who trimmed the vines, not five kilometers from here, there is a noble symbol, that of the Cross of the Legion of Honor. He, perhaps of all, best represented the humble and proud French countryman, the peasant, the farmer. He was a private, yet the highest reward within the gift of the Republic was his—the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

"As the talented sculptor who designed the monument and I were conferring, I received a notice from the War Ministry—a posthumous citation, more than ten years late. I shall read it:

> Private of line infantry, during a combat on August 24, 1914, voluntarily left shelter to rescue his wounded captain, under brisk fire from nearby elements of enemy infantry and under artillery bombardment. Having carried his officer to safety, refused the offer of another officer that he escort his charge further back from the front, saying, 'My duty is with my company.'

"It was one of your own who spoke those simple yet great words—one of your own, yes, and one of my own, who paid for them that very day with his life. His brothers, his son, live among us. That simple hero was named, Bertheau, Jacques-Louis!"

There was an explosion of applause. Ber-

theau, dazed, suddenly remembered what Colonel Hulot, his old captain, had promised. This was it: he had awarded him a citation. And the deputy, consulting the list, had naturally believed it to be posthumous! Up on the platform, the mayor was leaning close to the speaker, talking, talking. The deputy glanced in Bertheau's direction, shrugged slightly, shifted his papers and opened his mouth to continue.

"I'm here, I'm alive!" Bertheau shouted. This was the time to proclaim his existence publicly. He started to shove through the crowd. Those chaps up there were burying him! His drinking friends were urging him on, but the constable interfered, caught Bertheau by the shoulder. "No nonsense, now, Jacques! Don't disturb the peace—"

"Let go, you old fool!" Bertheau shoved him.

THE constable had evidently tipped off the gendarmes that there might be trouble, for two of them appeared with startling speed. While the constable gripped him tightly around both arms, they got hold of him and trotted through the crowd, as the deputy went on with his speech. One of them held a moist, meaty hand over his mouth. They drew him between two houses, away from the mob.

"Are you going to be good?" one asked. Bertheau, indignant, struggled and kicked. So the gendarme relaxed his grip on his mouth and smacked him hard with the knuckles, on the chin. "Do you want us to run you in for disorderly conduct and irreverence? Must you always mess things up?"

"Just let go of my arms and I'll show you."

"Oh, tough, eh?" The gendarme sighed. "All right, Albert, get to work on him."

They gave him what they termed 'a cooling massage.' That is, while they did not mark his face, black his eyes or break his nose, they slapped his head until he was partially stunned, brought the edge of their big hands across his stomach. When they got through, all the fight had left Bertheau for a time, even if he was not a soft man.

He was sufficiently recovered, however, in time to join his family group for the big dinner at the farm.

He was in a peculiar situation. They were proud of his distinction as a dead man—the only private in the whole district to be awarded the Legion of Honor—and ashamed of his behavior as a living man. He had caused something of a scandal, marred the ceremonies. All right, his brothers admitted, it was hard to take, but out of respect for Henri, if no one else, couldn't he have checked himself? The way he had shouted present, and rattled the veteran!

"D'you know what I think?" Brother Alphonse said. "You're getting soured! That's what, you're soured!"

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"Listen, they took my woman and my farm, and now they call me dead and throw their damn trinket at me—"

"That's no way to talk in front of the children," Jean stated. "We don't have to stand for your impious, Bolshevik ways!"

"You don't, eh?"

"No." Jean rose. "And if you want to, come outside. I've never been a bandit, I've never cut a throat, like some people, but I'm still able to give you a good licking, you species of a mangy Muscovite!"

"You make me sick," Jacques Bertheau said, rising.

"Yeh, you come back with nothing but the clothes on your back; we feed you, shelter you —and we make you sick!"

"I work, and you've got my farm!"

"We paid for it, fair and square. Paid for it to your own wife. Can we rob our children because you were unlucky? You're soured." Jean drew himself erect again. "Do you know what? You're not a good Christian!"

Jacques Bertheau looked at his brothers. Big Gregoire was seated, munching and drinking.

"Well, have you nothing to say, Gregoire?"

"Me?" Gregoire shrugged, put down his glass. "I was under age when all this happened. You can't blame me. I'm sorry for you Jacques, but really, I think they're right—you're soured."

"You make me sick," Jacques Bertheau repeated, helplessly, and he went out, climbed on his bicycle and weaved back to town. He joined a group of people looking at the monument. Yes, there was his name, followed by the little symbolic star of the Legion of Honor. Jacques Bertheau was a knight!

"When one has been so honored," an old gentleman said after looking at Bertheau, "one should have a sense of dignity!"

"You make me sick, you old goat," Jacques Bertheau said. He went into a side street and entered a small café, where he found some friends gathered.

They chaffed him a good deal about his Legion of Honor, suggested that when he really died, the Republic would promote him to Officer, and by the time he had disintegrated completely, he would be a Grand Cross. Bertheau drank all afternoon, bottle after bottle. He drank his favorite local wine, thin and dry to the palate, very light in alcohol, but cumulative in its effects. He treated people and they treated him. In a way, he had a good time. But he kept thinking that he was really soured on life. What did they expect him to do, go by every day and see himself marked as dead on that monument?

He would have to ask Lemaigre if he could sue to have that name removed, after he was declared officially alive. And he decided that he would buy some red ribbon, to wear and annoy the constable. As a knight of the Legion of Honor, he was entitled to wear a red ribbon on his lapel. He spoke of this to his pals, who laughed.

"Fat chance of your getting that name off! It's there for keeps."

"I can't, eh?"

"You can't!"

"Will you bet on it?"

"Three to one," someone said, "a hundred francs."

Jacques Bertheau shrugged. He continued drinking. By nine o'clock, Haubois being merely the center of a group of rural hamlets, farmers started to go home, the dancing in the square was over, the streets became empty, deserted. His legs felt soft and limp when he left, after ten, and walked toward the inn. Marguerite was behind the bar, and she gave him two drinks of cognac on the house. She, the widow, was proud of her late husband. At least, that was what Bertheau understood. It soured him more.

He drifted out again, to the filling-station, where Costal was serving the last customers. He stood around, annoying the man who had married his wife by counting the money aloud, and chuckling, "Eh, eh, don't tell me you can't pay! Hand over fist, hand over fist! Don't glare at me. Whose money put you in business?"

"If I didn't have a weak heart," Costal mumbled.

"Eh, cut it out, you're not before an army doctor!" Bertheau made himself at home, prowled in the repair shop. He fumbled among tools. Finally, Costal announced that it was eleven and that he was closing. The taproom, he said, would be open for a while, to paying customers.

WHEN Bertheau left the filling-station, having made up his mind, he carried a heavy hammer and a chisel in his pants pockets. He would show them if they could proclaim him dead! It was his own name, he had a perfect right to take it off. He stilled his last doubts by going into the tap-room and ordering a couple of Pernods, which he told Costal to deduct from what was owed him. That made the belated customers, most of whom knew the situation, laugh. Bertheau was pleased.

A few minutes later, he stood before the monument, felt of the tablets. There were five officers' names, a space with some ornament, then the other dead listed alphabetically. His was sixth or seventh from that ornament, on the very first plaque. He struck a match to make sure, kept a finger on the name, lost the place, struck another match.

At last, he was sure of the spot and rested the tip of the chisel against the *U*, last letter of his name. He struck a tentative blow, a stronger one, another. Then the hammer bounced, the chisel slipped, and he had to scratch a match. He had done little damage,

save where the chisel had slipped and scratched the surface. He steadied himself on his wobbly legs, adjusted the tool, struck hard.

He struck once, then froze, astonished. He heard the beating of drums, a confused murmur of voices. For a moment, he shivered with superstitious dread, then realized that the sounds did not come from within the monument but from somewhere in the town. Before long, a troop of men appeared, moving rather slowly and uncertainly. There was the glitter of torchlight on brass helmets, on buttons and belt-buckles.

He huddled at the foot of the monument to let this procession go by. Drunk as he was, he realized the need for secrecy. But he played in poor luck. It was a rather sodden aggregation of firemen and veterans who had decided to hold a last, impromptu torchlight parade before the new monument, pride of Haubois. Inevitably, they saw Bertheau, crouched at the foot of the marble and bronze mass, distinguished the tools on the ground. In another second, one of the more sober distinguished the scratch on the plaque, the incisions on that letter.

"Vampire, vandal—pro-Boche . . ."

If those men had been cold sober, Bertheau would have been killed. As it was, they rushed upon him and beat him severely before the gendarmes, not too sober themselves, thought of their duty and formally arrested him. He was carried to the town lockup, unconscious, his face cut and bleeding. In the morning, he was running such a fever that he was transported to a hospital in a larger city.

At the end of six weeks, when his sprung ribs had mended and his face was presentable, he was taken to prison, held for trial on a dozen charges: destruction of a shrine, which was phrased legally as degradation of a public monument, vandalism, disorderly conduct, drunkeness on the public road, resisting arrest, blows and abrasions to gendarmes in the exercise of their functions. His very misfortunes counted against him, and he was presumed to have had motives connected with communism, as he had served in the Bolshevik Army in Siberia!

Three grave judges considered him with dislike. One of them had had a son whose name appeared on that very monument, and all three had been reserve officers. Jacques Bertheau's war record, his decorations, for the award of the Legion of Honor automatically granted him the War Cross as well, could not be held in consideration—Jacques Bertheau had been killed in August, 1914. That he was guilty of attempted degradation, and the mere attempt

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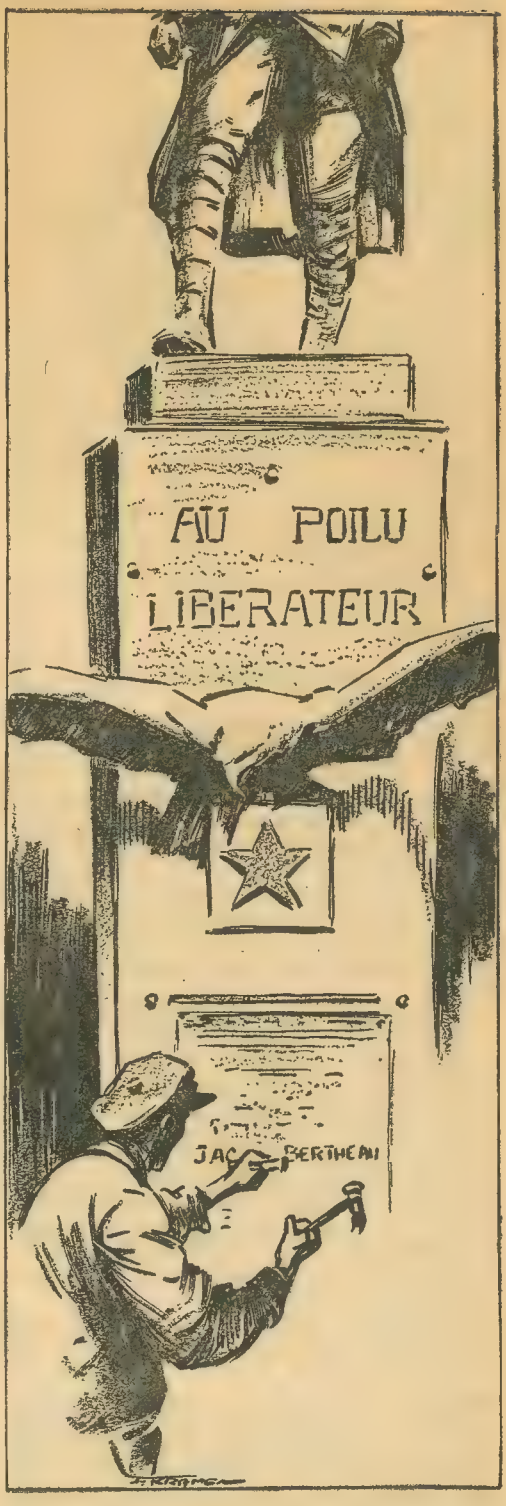


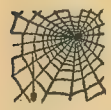
He struck a tentative blow. The hammer bounced and the chisel slipped. He adjusted the tool, struck again, then froze, astonished.

counted as an accomplished misdemeanor in this case, was undeniable. The lightest sentence was one month in prison, the heaviest two years.

Bertheau was not afraid. He told his side of the story, and thought that would clear him. After all, he pointed out, he had done no harm, the damage could be repaired with a bit of polishing. He also told the French judges that he had twice been tried for his life in Siberia, several times sentenced by German tribunals. So they did not scare him. As a last resort, he had believed they would find it hard to sentence a man who had no legal existence. He had counted without the judicial mind.

The final judgment spoke of him as, "An individual claiming the name of Bertheau, Jacques-Louis, without proof, bearer of an identity card made out to Mortier, Auguste-Raoul," and he was sentenced to fourteen months in prison and five hundred francs fine. He protested, asked for another lawyer, another trial and impartial judges, and was taken away still protesting.

It was unjust, he mumbled. He mumbled that for fourteen months, while manufacturing felt slippers in prison.



HE REACHED Haubois again, by bus, early in the year 1927. Nothing had changed, save that Marguerite had another child. He called on Lawyer Lemaigre. The old gentleman was very grieved by developments. The investigation had reached results while Bertheau was in prison, but the court had refused to admit his identity and the whole thing had to be tried over again. At that, Lemaigre added, there would be some delay, because Bertheau's prison sentence had suspended certain legal rights for a period of several months.

On his way to Gregoire's farm, Bertheau took a look at the monument. Not a trace of his exploit could be seen, and there was his name, followed by the tiny symbolic star! His brothers took him in without protest, gave him money for new clothing, gave him work. But he could see that they considered him something of a wastrel and were not too pleased to have him around. It was awkward to have one of the smaller children ask in a shrill voice, when the curate was in for dinner, "Uncle Jacques, is it true they bake dead mice right in the bread in prison?"

The poachers and drifters in the little cafés greeted him with open arms. Rumor had reached them of his sarcastic comments to the judges at the trial. He was a real hero to them.

Strangely enough, he was a hero to his son. The boy was growing tall and muscular, and was having quarrels with his step-father, who kept telling him that he was like his natural father. For the boy's good, Bertheau found himself forced to profess shame for his jail sentence, to declare the authorities had been right, and even to back some of Costal's statements. He forced himself to relatively correct behavior, visited the inn often to talk to young Jacques, who, his mother said, thought the sun rose and set in him. Bertheau felt cheapened and lost, for, of course, the farm girl had broken their engagement.

One evening, while visiting his son, he heard Costal and another man speaking loudly. The voice of the stranger startled him. He had heard it somewhere, and not in France. He went into the taproom and looked at the man, who was trying to sell groceries to the innkeeper. The fellow was rather short, stocky, and his neck was tanned and seamed. When the man turned, he looked familiar, but Bertheau could not have named him.

"Celestin! You old crook, Celestin!" the man was across the room in four strides, pumping Bertheau's hand up and down. "What are you doing here? But of course, this was your home town—Haubois, Haubois, I kept thinking I'd heard that name often! Don't you know me, really? No? I'm Fabeck, Captain Fabeck!"

"Captain Fabeck? Yes, I know you, Captain."

"Not 'Captain' any more, thank God! Not even a soldier, thank God! Fabeck at his old trade. Fabeck, the civilian!"

"You speak damn good French now, Captain."

"Call me Fabeck, Celestin! I should. Nine years I have heard nothing but French. And, my friend, I am a Frenchman. A genuine Frenchman, like you."

Fabeck was pleased and excited at the meeting. He ordered food, wine, champagne.

"What happened to me? Well, they shipped me into Siberia, and I was kept on the Amur for months. Then, you know, the Russians made a separate peace. In one way or another, I had saved money, and I paid my way back all through Siberia and Russia. I was in active service again, too. In France, in 1918, wounded in the leg. After the Armistice, I went home. My wife—but bah, it is such an ordinary story! And there was no work for me—no German could be purchasing agent for a Berlin Hotel in France. I tried this, I tried that. I grew thin, so thin.

"Then one day, in Sarrebourg, I enlisted in the Foreign Legion. I went to Africa. Seven years, all told. Wounded, and these things." Fabeck touched his lapel, and Bertheau saw several little ribbons. "Middle Atlas, Sahara, then Indo-China, and the end of the Riff Campaign, Jebel Iskraten, Abd-el-Krim, everything. I was a sergeant at the end, and got naturalized French."

"The life is hard?"

"Yes and no." Fabeck reflected. "To someone who's never done anything, yes. To our

kind, no. Look at me. I am better than I was, eh? Well, in two years I'll be fifty. That's why I got out. Before fifty, you can readapt yourself, after, nothing doing. You related to the man I was trying to sell?"

"Yes and no," Bertheau said in his turn. He told his story, and Fabeck gripped his hand.

"Ah, yes! Sometimes luck is bad. But it will turn, you'll see. So you had killed a sentry? See, you had good luck—I did not know it. Else I'd have had to shoot you. And now, I'm drinking with you. That's life—and eleven years' passing."

TWO days later, Jacques Bertheau enlisted in the Foreign Legion, giving his name as Hans Renlinger, his nationality as German, for purposes of his own. Ex-Captain Fabeck had given him an idea, a wonderful idea!

He was on the move again. He crossed the Mediterranean Sea, reached Oran, Sidi-bel-Abbes. On the whole, he liked the Legion—the life was not hard, routine drill did not bore him. Further, he was not conspicuous, for in contrast to the stories of those around him, his life had been a banal series of misfortunes without real tragedy. The Foreign Legion contains a good many glib liars, but also has a good many men who tell truths that sound like lies.

Bertheau saw action—in the desert, in the mountains. He was an old campaigner who knew the ropes. He did not risk his life foolishly, but he was ready to take a chance when it meant something. He was cited several times, wore fresh ribbons on his khaki tunic—the Colonial Cross, the Colonial Medal. He sailed East again, in the veteran *Mythos* which had taken so many Legionnaires to Indo-China. He returned a sergeant.

In 1931, Jacques Bertheau, known in the Legion as Sergeant Renlinger, tanned, hard and bemedaled, played his long planned stroke—he applied for French citizenship. As a French citizen with full rights and with Hulot's affidavit and support, he had reasoned, he could easily establish that he had been Bertheau, Jacques. Then he could open suit, force a refund of the money paid to Costal, regain his farm and end his days working his own acres. But he discovered that while the Legion had accepted him under an assumed name, the French Republic would not naturalize him without proper papers of identification.

Bertheau was angry at himself. He should have foreseen this, provided a birth certificate. It was too late to do it under the name of Renlinger, so he paid a smart Legionnaire to obtain for him a new identity. He was given a name, a birthplace and enough information to fill out another application. Unfortunately, the Legionnaire whose name and papers had been supplied him happened to be discharged, and

Bertheau saw action with the Legion in the desert, the mountains. He returned a sergeant.

was at home when the official French inquiry reached his village. So the second application was thrown out, and Bertheau was severely reprimanded for trying to deceive the authorities.

In desperation, he gave his own name and birthplace. This application was turned down for a number of reasons. A man already French could not be naturalized French. Reports had it that he had served a long prison sentence. Moreover, Bertheau, Jacques, born at Haubois in 1888, was dead, killed in action in late August, 1914! So finally Bertheau returned home in 1932, still officially dead, traveling on his Legion papers.

Nothing was changed, save that there were more children around his brothers' farms. Marguerite herself had two new ones. Jacques Bertheau had nothing but a collection of ribbons, some of which he could not wear, and his name on the monument, with the small symbolic star after it. Brother Gregoire permitted him to make a plank room for himself in a corner of the barn, told him he could do as much or as little as he pleased, that there would be food, clothing and shelter for him, and money in reasonable amounts.

"After all, you're my brother," he concluded.

Bertheau's son had volunteered for the army and now was a machine-gun corporal in the air force. At twenty, he was a big fellow, two inches taller than Jacques senior, but lighter and rangier.

"You got gypped all around, papa," he told Bertheau when he came on leave. "You can't blame mama, she thought you were dead. And she's not so smart. But just wait until I am twenty-five and get married. I can legally ask for a settlement. Costal's a swine. Oh, I'm not

saying he treated me any differently than his own kids. But that's bad enough."

But after three years in the army, Bertheau's son got a job at once with one of the French air lines and was shipped to Indo-China as a mechanic. He wrote his father three times a year. Bertheau lived on Gregoire's farm, half-laborer, half-relative. Costal was growing wealthier, more influential. He had an American automobile and his inn boasted the largest radio in the vicinity. Despite the occasional false mobilizations and the rumors of war, 1914 seemed a very long time ago. Lawyer Lemaigre died, but one of his last jobs was to obtain a definite sum per month for Bertheau, from his brothers, as a sort of pension.

IN 1939, the Second World War broke out. Young Jacques Bertheau came from Indo-China to serve in the aviation. He was a sub-lieutenant, slim and handsome in his blue uniform, looked a real gentleman. Bertheau was very proud of him.

Then the lightning struck, and in June, 1940, a long line of German tanks rolled into Haubois, followed by masses of infantry. The war was over, France was beaten. Bertheau shrugged—it had been fated, ever since 1914. There was very little change for him, he went on working as before. What grieved him was that he knew his son had been broken-hearted—he was young, had little philosophy. He was reported as missing since June Fourteenth. Two of Marguerite's other boys, real Costals, were prisoners in Germany.

In the spring of 1941, Fabeck reappeared. He was a good German again, with some indefinite mission in the region. He wore no uniform, had no title. But he busied himself here and there. He knew the local resources very well. He sent for Bertheau and offered him a job. It smacked very much of espionage, and the farmer refused. He also refused to join the Pétain National Legion.

"You are a fool," Fabeck informed him. "What did France, what did these people ever do for you? You got cheated for doing your duty. Look at me! I am a good German. Yet when Germany did not feed me, I became French . . . for the time. One must always watch out for oneself."

"I'm no Boche," Bertheau retorted.

"Watch your language," Fabeck snapped. "Now, do as you wish. I have a friendly feeling for you, because we knew each other long. But do not forget I know you murdered a sentry. I know it has been over twenty years, and that legally you're in the clear. But suppose I mention it to some of the young fellows here, would they not find an excuse to do you harm? Bertheau, I shall leave you alone, but when I call you and ask you questions, answer them."

"I will, if I know the answers."

That first year of the occupation was a confused period in France. Nobody liked having the Germans swarming all over the country, but what could be done about it? Millions of Frenchmen, with what they had in the way of tanks and planes and cannon, had been shattered by the German Army. France had gone down before the German onslaught, as an isolated outpost is carried in the first rush of an enemy attack. France had fallen fighting at the front.

Fabeck had made his headquarters on the first floor of Costal's inn. The two were said to be partners. Costal was making money, buying farm produce which he shipped to the cities, with Fabeck's approval. Costal had some occult powers. If a farmer was troubled by the Germans, for instance, over the number of cows he kept, a visit to Costal, a conference, the payment of a certain sum, and the matter was arranged. If one needed agricultural tools, Costal could arrange for them, at exhorbitant prices, of course. But he was too stingy to arrange for the liberation of his own sons, which could be done for a consideration.

When the underground resistance started in Burgundy, Bertheau refused to join. He had had enough of adventures. He was fed up. Sarcastically, he rebuffed the man who approached him.

"I've made the supreme sacrifice. If you don't believe me, take a look at the monument!"

The military post kept by the Germans in the village was small, but SS guards and Gestapo visited frequently, to select and remove prominent citizens as hostages. Many of them were shot in reprisal for acts of aggression or sabotage in the region—among them one of Bertheau's brothers, Jean, who had helped partisans to hide.

One afternoon, when Jacques Bertheau was working in a field, Marguerite came to see him. No one was within yards of them, yet she peered fearfully around and lowered her voice when she spoke.

"Jacques—you know I've always been sorry, at heart. . ."

"That's good news," he said quietly, "even if a little late."

"Don't make it hard for me to talk, it's hard enough. It's all right for me to be seen talking to you, because of our son, Jacques. I wouldn't dare speak to anyone else. I really shouldn't talk at all, I suppose. But I can't stand it any longer. You—you must know somebody who can tell—somebody who can tell people not to talk at the inn, even when they think they're alone. They have megaphones in the walls—"

"Microphones."

"Some machine to listen with, you know. Even—even in the toilets at the back of the yard." She looked at her husband steadily. "You'll attend to telling somebody?"

"Maybe yes, maybe no," Bertheau shrugged.

Caution was ingrained in him. "And maybe somebody will watch where I go to tell that somebody, eh?"

"How can you think that, Jacques?"

"How?" His temper snapped. "I suppose I can trust you, eh? I suppose you don't know what might happen to Costal if I told somebody about the microphones?"

"I am a Frenchwoman"—Marguerite lifted her chin—"and if Costal's working for them, well, let him pay."

Bertheau dug in his spade, tossed soil about, grumbling.

"I get it, I get it. He won't fork out to get his own flesh and blood out of prison, eh?" He threw the implement twenty feet away, confronted her, shaking. "Well, old girl, you can do about them what you did for me, when I was eating KK bread and turnips in Pomerania—forget about it! I can tell you one thing, they sure miss mama's cooking!"

"Oh, Jacques, don't say such things!"

"And I hope they come back and find their women married to profiteering slackers and swine—it was good enough for me, you remember?" The tears came to his eyes, and he concluded savagely, "Get away before I pick up that spade and go to work on you!"

"Oh, Jacques," she wept as she went, "you've let yourself become soured!"

A LITTLE later, Jacques Bertheau went over to the spot where Big Gregoire and three of his workmen were having a snack in the shade of a tree. He accepted a swig from a bottle, wiped his lips.

"I don't want to mix in the damn cuttings-up going on around here," he stated, "but here's a tip to the wise: keep your mouths shut at the inn. The place's wired, even the latrines."

A man propped himself eagerly on one elbow and said, "Say! That explains a lot of things! Thanks, old man, we'll remember it after they've gone."

Bertheau rinsed his mouth with a swig of wine, spat.

"Don't make it the Legion of Honor, eh? I've got *that*."

Bertheau did not participate in the resistance movement at that time. Nevertheless, there were nights when he could not sleep well, when the vibrations of remote detonations stirred his blood. He was like an old hunting dog who hears the young hounds baying through the moonlit hills. Then, also, he hated Boches—even the friendly Herr Fabeck, who protested he was a friend of the French. Perhaps Fabeck's sort were the worst, because they had qualities—kindliness, definite physical courage—that disarmed suspicion. Bertheau even hated

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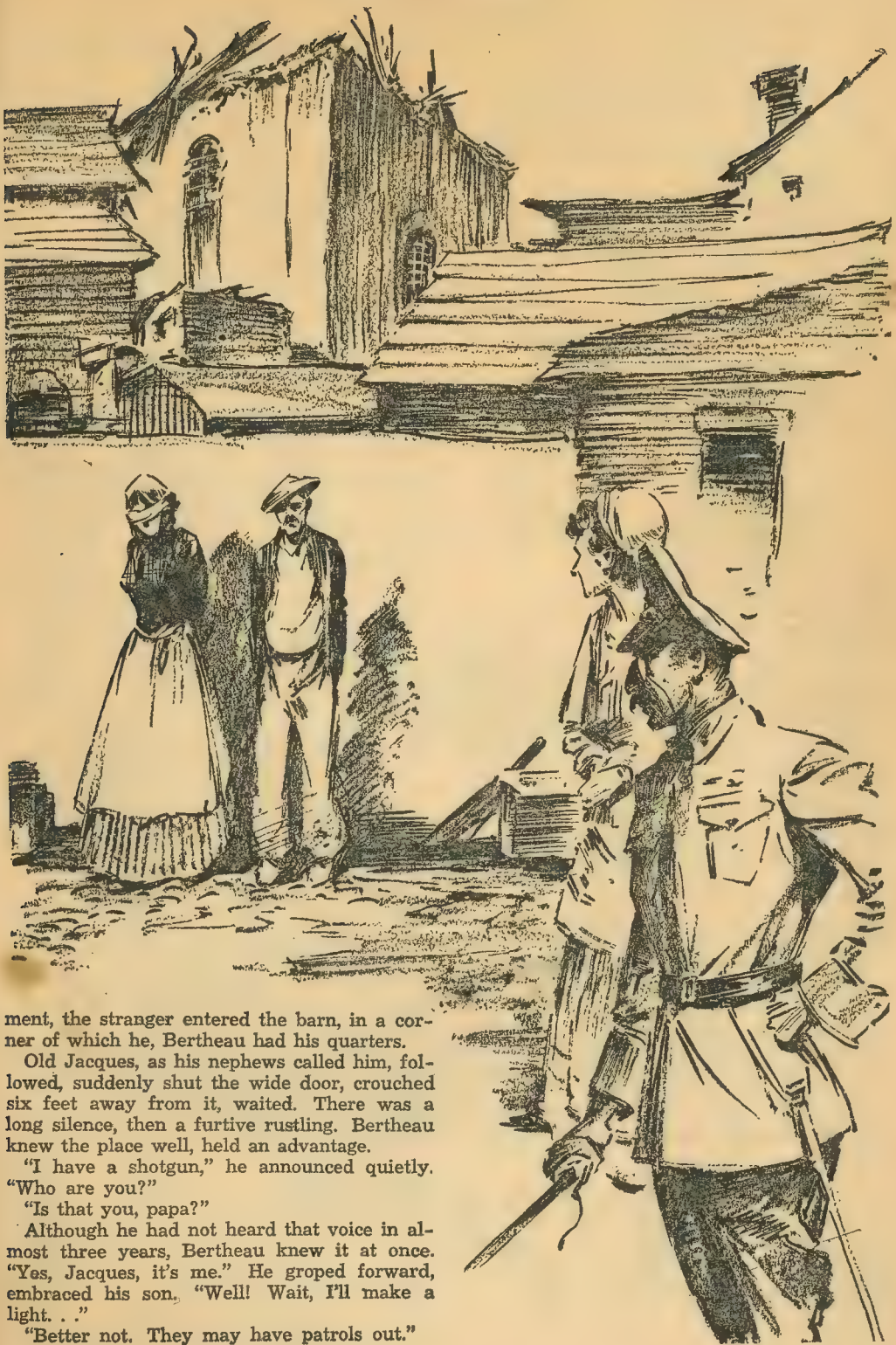
the collaborating Frenchmen, and agreed that they should be destroyed. From Laval at the top to the thousands of Costals throughout the country, they should be purged. But he had determined not to risk life or limb in achieving that!

Then came an evening in July 1942, when he was awakened by the barking of the dog. He knew that Big Gregoire and the boys were not out that night. Someone was prowling nearby. A petty thief, a messenger, a spy? Bertheau had no gun, for the Germans had called in all firearms, so he picked up a hatchet and went out, barefooted, to investigate. The moment he reached the yard, the dog was quiet, save for the clicking of his chain.

Bertheau crouched in the darkness. The main house was shuttered, there was no light, no sound. The watching man kept his eyes on a lighter patch in the center of the yard. Before long, a shadow crossed that swiftly. Bertheau grinned—the man knew how to move, but he was up against an older hand! To his amaze-

Many peasants were shot in reprisal for acts of aggression or sabotage in the region. The SS guards and Gestapo were very busy.



ment, the stranger entered the barn, in a corner of which he, Bertheau had his quarters.

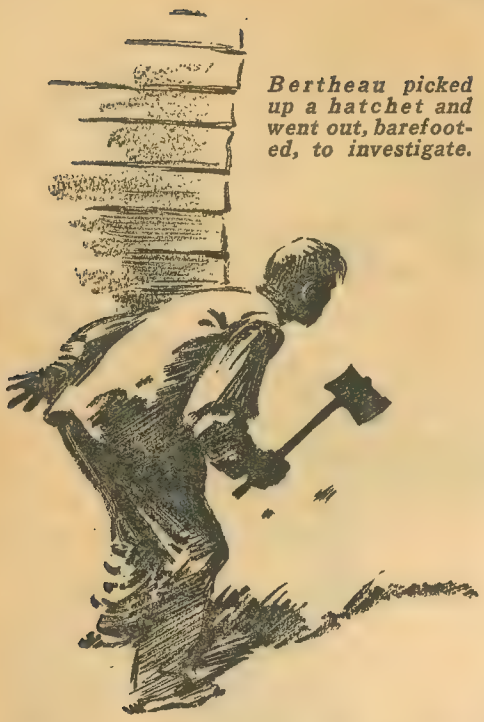
Old Jacques, as his nephews called him, followed, suddenly shut the wide door, crouched six feet away from it, waited. There was a long silence, then a furtive rustling. Bertheau knew the place well, held an advantage.

"I have a shotgun," he announced quietly. "Who are you?"

"Is that you, papa?"

Although he had not heard that voice in almost three years, Bertheau knew it at once. "Yes, Jacques, it's me." He groped forward, embraced his son. "Well! Wait, I'll make a light. . ."

"Better not. They may have patrols out."



Bertheau picked up a hatchet and went out, barefooted, to investigate.

"Come into my dump. The window's screened."

Two minutes later, he sat on a chair and stared at his son. Jacques was seated on the bed, smiling. He looked healthy, had thickened in the shoulders and chest, his silky blond hair was beginning to recede. But he was no longer a youth, he was a mature man. He was almost thirty, Bertheau realized, almost thirty! He wore a shabby old suit, cracked shoes with thick soles.

"Escaped?" Bertheau asked.

"Escaped? Oh, no," the younger man laughed. "I was shipped in. Our information is that you're in the clear, so I thought I'd be safe here until I made contacts."

"You're safe," Bertheau assured him. "You working for the English?"

"With them, rather." Jacques smiled. "They sent me here to organize things a bit. Because I know the region." He pulled out a package of cigarettes, German issue. They smoked. "I hear my step-father's with the Boches. Right, eh?"

"Yep, they have the money."

"Listen, if you see mama, don't tell her about my being here. I'm crazy to see her, of course. But she thinks we're all alike—she might tell one of the girls, and the old man would be told. I don't care about myself, much, but I have work to do."

Bertheau was flooded with an immense joy, tinged with shame. His son trusted him with his life, but could not wholly trust his mother. Jacques did not care that his father had served in jail, that he was an ex-Legionnaire, a workman, almost a tramp. In a pinch, when it was a matter of life and death, his son had come to him! Bertheau could have wept with happiness. This wiped out many bitter memories!

"Don't blame your mother too much, sonny," he said handsomely. "She was a victim of chance, like me."

"Oh, I realize that." Jacques locked his hands over his knee. "You know, papa, I did a lot of thinking since I last saw you. I was away from home before the war, but I always knew I could get back if I really wanted to. So I couldn't understand. But after, when it was impossible to come home, I knew it was hell you'd been through. And I was living comfortably, in England, in America. I kept thinking: Papa had ten years of this, and he wasn't fed right, he was always in danger. And instead of rewarding him, the Government jailed him. Everything was gone when he got back, his wife, his farm, his family. Papa, the wonder is that you didn't kill somebody!"

"Nobody had harmed me on purpose," Bertheau said. "One thing you learn, sonny, is to take the breaks as they come. . . You look tired. Stretch out and get some sleep."

Bertheau blew out the light, and sat by the bed, thinking.

He was still awake at dawn, felt no fatigue. In the pale light, he looked at the calm face of his sleeping son. Jacques was thirty, and for ten years, he had remembered him as a toddling baby. At thirty, he, Bertheau, had been a hungry nomad in Siberia, and believed himself the most unfortunate man on earth. But he could hope for France and safety. His Jacques had come home, but if the Germans found him, they would shoot him!

The ordinary young Frenchman of today was much worse off than he had been—the Boches had turned France into something worse than the Siberia he remembered. Thousands, a million, were actual prisoners, the others were slaves. A few were exiles. Something had to be done about it.

Jacques awoke, stretched and grinned.

"Well, we've got to work for the Republic!" Then he shrugged. "Oh, I don't mean you. You have a right to be fed up."

"Let's get to work," Bertheau concluded.

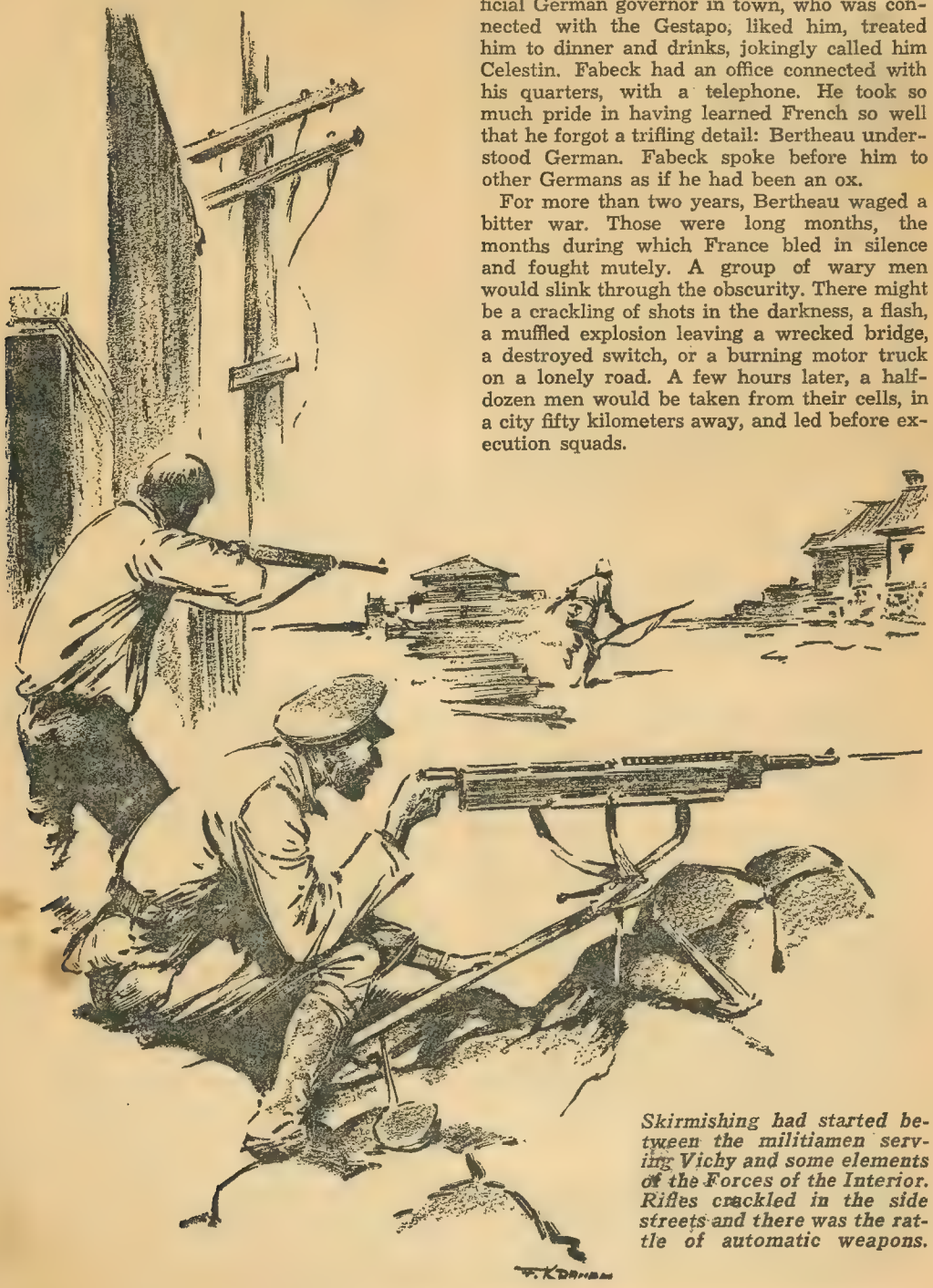
YOUNG JACQUES acted as a staff-officer and liaison man for the resistance forces in the region. Old Jacques had no trouble connecting with a group of partisans, for his two remaining brothers were members. He had no ambition, but his years of guerrilla war in Siberia, his five years in the Foreign Legion, had given him a good grounding for

the work needed. He was among the leaders within a short time.

He was never suspected by the enemy. His past was known, he had been sentenced to prison for what was believed to have been an unpatriotic manifestation. He had declared openly that he would not fight when the Germans arrived.

Herr Fabeck, who appeared to be the unofficial German governor in town, who was connected with the Gestapo, liked him, treated him to dinner and drinks, jokingly called him Celestin. Fabeck had an office connected with his quarters, with a telephone. He took so much pride in having learned French so well that he forgot a trifling detail: Bertheau understood German. Fabeck spoke before him to other Germans as if he had been an ox.

For more than two years, Bertheau waged a bitter war. Those were long months, the months during which France bled in silence and fought mutely. A group of wary men would slink through the obscurity. There might be a crackling of shots in the darkness, a flash, a muffled explosion leaving a wrecked bridge, a destroyed switch, or a burning motor truck on a lonely road. A few hours later, a half-dozen men would be taken from their cells, in a city fifty kilometers away, and led before execution squads.



Skirmishing had started between the militiamen serving Vichy and some elements of the Forces of the Interior. Rifles crackled in the side streets and there was the rattle of automatic weapons.

It was a strange war, because it had no front, no rear, because often men in the same family served on different sides. A man of the resistance might have his father in the National Legion, devoted to Petain, another might have a brother serving with the Vichy Militia.

In some cases, the situations became tragic burlesque. A gendarme, member of the underground, might be ordered to arrest an innocent man suspected of having carried out the very mission he himself had accomplished! There were partisans won over by the Boches, there were official collaborationists who worked for the resistance, there were deserters from the German Army with the *Maquisards*.

"It won't be easy to sort everything out," people predicted.

But there was a list of persons in every community, persons who, as the partisans expressed it, would settle at once for many things. Men doomed to be killed as soon as the Boches were kicked out. There were more than a dozen in and around Haubois, some of them aware of their exact standing, others who thought they had covered their deeds. There was a farmer who had sold information for a few hundred francs, a police agent who had put too much zeal into assisting the Gestapo, there were crooks and profiteers, such as Costal. They were spared because their deaths were not worth the lives of hostages.

When the Allies landed on the beaches of Normandy, the partisans took up arms. But the local groups received orders to wait. Burgundy was in the path of the German retreat, the roads swarmed with troops, and an uprising could be crushed if it started too soon. The customary activities proceded at an accelerated pace. Bridges were blown up, viaducts destroyed, convoys attacked and burned. Then, with the landing of the Americans and French in the South, the lid was off.

ALTHOUGH the German High Command may have known the true situation, the Germans and the collaborators in Haubois did not realize that the fun was over and that somebody would be around to collect before long. When they did begin to realize it, when the counter-offensives that were to throw the Allies into the sea did not come, they made feverish preparations to leave. Costal sent his family into Switzerland, where most of his money was banked. He might have fled himself, but he had real estate to dispose of. The tale of greed is the same everywhere. He was caught like the monkey who will not let go of the rice in the cocoanut.

Liberation came to Haubois unexpectedly, swiftly. There had been no pitched battles in the region, the Germans believed that they had a fortnight more at the very least, but an Allied armored column by-passed other positions and hurtled northward. One evening, the Americans were reported a hundred kilometers away, meeting with stiff resistance, and an hour before noon of the next day, they were twenty-five kilometers from Haubois, progressing through dislocated Boche units.

There were perhaps forty German infantrymen stationed in Haubois permanently, with a few telegraphers and administration employees. A lieutenant was in command. He had his two trucks ready and might have got out without a fight if Herr Fabeck, known to have a pull at headquarters, had not asked for help and protection. Trusting to his luck, as usual, the former captain of artillery ordered trunks and boxes piled into a car.

Skirmishing had started between the militiamen serving Vichy and some elements of the Forces of the Interior. Rifles crackled in the side streets, there was the rattle of automatic weapons. A strong group of partisans entered the square, spotted the Germans before the inn, and opened fire. The lieutenant then leaped on one of the trucks, and ordered his men to drive off, leaving Fabeck in the lurch.

Fabeck was an old man. He had been an opportunist, a crook, but he remained brave to the end. He had a girl with him, a French girl. He shoved her toward the inn, produced a large pistol, looked for his enemies.

"I am a French citizen," he called out. "I'm a French citizen!"

It was a strange plea for pity at that time. An automatic rifle hammered from a doorway across the square. Fabeck was knocked back two steps, spun and fell. The marksman raised his gun a bit and shredded the woman before she could hide. The shooting flushed a brace of German stragglers from a building nearby. The echoes had tricked them, and they realized, when they were almost in the middle of the square, that they had leaped into danger. They hesitated, not knowing whether to shoot or hold up their hands. The coppery crackle of a machine pistol sputtered from a window, both fell.

The resistance men came out into the open for the first time in that town, carrying weapons and wearing the tricolor bands. A group of eighteen or twenty men headed for the inn. Young Jacques hesitated, and Bertheau pushed his shoulders. "Maybe you better find something to do elsewhere, sonny."

The son nodded, turned and followed another detachment. Bertheau was not a vengeful man. He knew that Costal had not deliberately injured him. But he had hated the man for many years and was driven on by a queer curiosity. There was some speculation as to just how Costal would take it, tinged with a vague hope that he had escaped.

A lanky workman with a gray mustache had emerged from the ranks to take charge now. He grasped a woman servant by the shoulder, "Where is he?"

"In the yard."

The little band located Costal in one of the booths used by patrons of the inn. As they approached, Costal emerged. He did his best to appear casual, at ease, to bluff. But he made a bad job of it, he was livid with terror, his cheeks quivered, his eyelids fluttered.

"What did I do?" he asked.

"You got my boy shipped to Germany," the lanky man said.

"I demand a trial. I know what you mean, I did mention your son as a machinist, but I didn't know that . . ." He looked from face to face, swallowed, calmed down somewhat. "Listen, I can prove that I helped you fellows a lot, too, supplied secret information about patrols. Yes, sure, I did business with them. Somebody had to—"

"You didn't know the latrines were wired?" another man asked.

"Yes, I . . . no, I didn't . . . wired . . . why . . . I . . ."

"Oh, let's get done with this," the old workman said wearily.

He walked up to Costal, twisted his knuckles in the front of his shirt, pushed him back against the plank wall of the shack. He pushed his pistol, a big German automatic, against his face and fired. Costal's skull blew up like a pumpkin under a sledge. The man released his grip, permitted the body to drop. He turned toward the others and shrugged.

"Well," he said defensively, "that bastard turned my kid in for deportation."

IN THE taproom of the inn, a middle-aged man was waiting for them, one of the town councilmen, Pertus. He wore a tricolor sash under his jacket.

"The Germans are retreating this way. I entreat you not to shoot, or they will destroy the town, and massacre the population. If they're left alone, they won't stop. The mayor sent me, he has orders for you not to shoot, came over the radio—"

The partisans remained in the inn. Bertheau stood by a window. He lighted a cigarette. He felt a queer sensation of emptiness, of uselessness. For twenty years, he had wished to kill Costal, subconsciously. Now, it was done and he felt no relief, no elation. The man had been little better than a cur, that was true, but how could Marguerite have known that? And it was late, too late. He was an old man—he was fifty-six!

German troop transports, half-tracks, self-propelled cannon, ammunition trucks rolled by under the windows. The soldiers crowded in big lorries shouted and sang. They seemed drunk, perhaps many of them *were* drunk. Some of them turned loose with rifles and automatics at the façades of the houses. They were in a surly mood, and it was probably true that an attack by the partisans would have little result beyond the burning of houses and the mass killing of inhabitants. The Allies were very close, but four or five hundred crazed soldiers could do a lot of damage in a very short time.

"Where are the American planes?" a young chap asked.

"They can't be everywhere, sonny." The man who had killed Costal spat on the parquet floor. "And I'd just as soon the Americans caught them further up the road—"

There were no more troop trucks, no more cannon. Two big tanks rolled in the street, passed very near. The crews took no chances—the hatches were down despite the heat. Shooting at these with small-caliber weapons would be like blowing peas at elephants. In other streets, the search for militiamen was continuing, judging by the scattered detonations. After the big tanks, smaller tanks appeared, scurried on. A command car packed with men flashed by, dodging in and out of the slower vehicles.

"That's all—no, two more," a man reported from a vantage point on the roof.

Two Mark IV tanks rolled into sight. Just past the inn, the one in the lead came to a stop. Probably a mechanical failure, for they heard the motor turn over and over, sputter, stop, and catch again. The tank behind it swung wide to the right to pass by, hesitated, then swung wider to avoid the bodies of the two Germans killed some minutes before. The driver seemed reluctant to crush the corpses, and found himself jammed close to an iron railing fencing off a grass plot. He backed a few feet, swung wide again . . .

The first tank got going, chugged away fast, the second backed to get room to turn north again. Somehow, even through the carapace of steel, it was plain that those within were rattled, nervous. The turret, its seventy-five millimeter cannon protruding like an enormous, sniffing snout, swung deliberately, alertly, from side to side. Then, brusquely, the vehicle picked up speed and entered the street opening on the north.

Unexpectedly, there was a long orange flame from the gun, a mighty detonation. The explosion that followed shook the houses, shattered windows. Fragments rained on the roofs and against the façade, plaster dropped from the ceilings. The cannon flashed twice more, and there were two explosions as violent as the first. Then the tank rolled out of sight.

For several seconds, the partisans remained frozen where they stood. Then they recovered, moved to the nearest windows, their boots crunching broken glass. Sounds became audible again to their aching ears, and a voice announced, "The dirty swine! They've knocked off our monument!"

All stared unbelievingly. Throughout the

German occupation, in Haubois as almost everywhere, the Boches had respected war memorials with ostentation. They even had held military ceremonies before them on Armistice Day. It had been a part of the carefully planned 'correct behavior.'

But the gunner in that last tank, aware that he would never come back or be called to account for disobeying orders, perhaps infuriated by the sight of the dead in German uniforms, had yielded to temptation and demolished that superb target of marble and bronze.

THE general indignation of the populace at the destruction of their monument abated somewhat when it was reported that the last group of tanks had been bombed and wrecked six kilometers north of Haubois by 'specialists' of the American Air Force. Rightly or wrongly, the charred and mangled body of a twenty-two-year-old Saxon gunner—his pay-book was found—was identified as that of the vandal.

"They only soaked me fourteen months," Bertheau mused, "but then, he did a much better job."

Three seventy-five-millimeter high-explosive shells had hit that small target. Little of the monument remained above the base. Children were roaming in the debris of the square, piously picking up chunks of metal and playfully trying to match fragments to form whole names. There was one bit which Bertheau might have liked for a souvenir, but although he had proved brave enough in action, he did not dare seek for it. Haubois was his home town. Too many people remembered what he had done, too many might guess that he alone did not mourn. They would call him a ghoul, after having called him a vandal.

At nightfall, Young Jacques came up to him where he stood on the sidewalk before the inn, almost at the exact spot on which Fabeck, whom he had known so long ago in Poland, had fallen. The boy had stitched the gold stripes of captain on the sleeves of a civilian jacket, wore several decorations. Several American and French officers were with him.

"My father," he introduced proudly, "Jacques-Louis Bertheau. One of ours."

They talked of the action that afternoon. As they were conversing, Pertus, the town councilman, bustled to join them. He was excited, gesticulating. He indicated the wreckage.

"Wanton destruction, gentlemen, pure spite! A sacrilege! Ah, those Boches, what swine!" He gave vent to an indignation that was the stronger for having been carefully held in check for more than four years. He caught Old Bertheau's amused glance, and decided it might be well to flatter him. "Monsieur Bertheau is one of our most distinguished citizens, gentlemen. A knight of the Legion of Honor."

One of the French officers looked at the old farmer curiously.

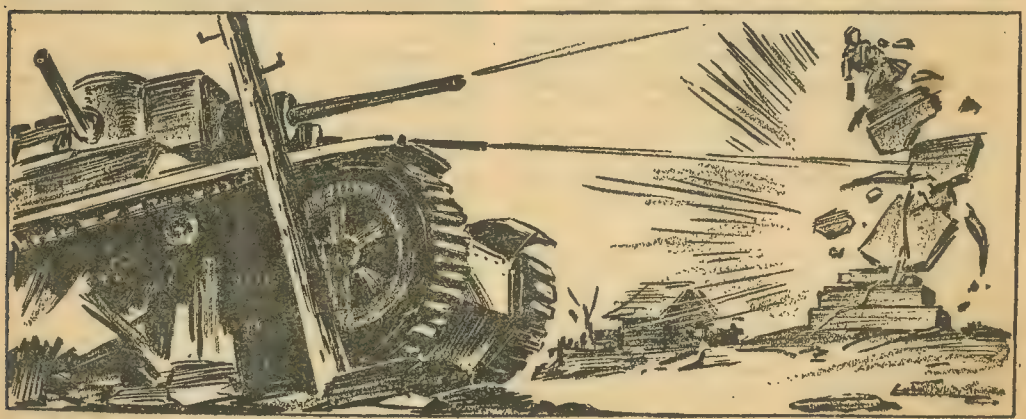
"Ah, really? Military award?"

Bertheau straightened his back, smiled.

"Of course, Major. But that was a long time ago, in the other war." He hesitated, then concluded before turning away, "Won the very day I was killed."

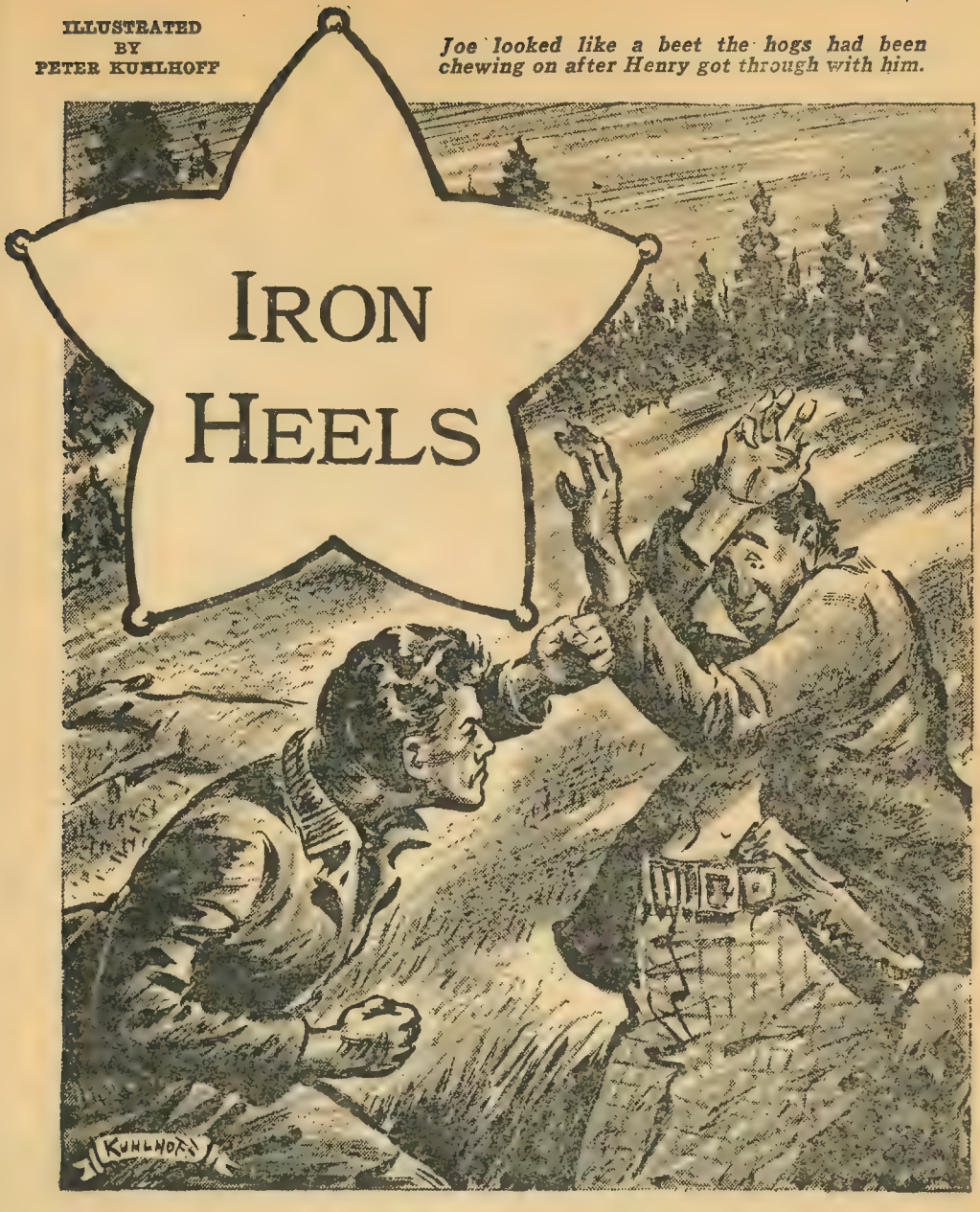
He had been mystified long enough, it was his turn to mystify others. Moreover, he was uttering nothing but the official truth, so long consecrated in bronze. He heard his son's laugh, and the councilman's hurried explanation, "Bertheau has had reverses, you understand, and he is somewhat soured!"

Old Jacques Bertheau laughed quietly as he walked. No, he was not soured, not now! The bronze letters that had proclaimed his death were gone, no longer would mock him every time he came to town. Yes, a new monument would be erected, but he doubted whether it would include him, a jail-bird! He had had an obscure dread of that inscription, as if it were calling him. That was what had been the matter with him, really. No man liked to look at his own tombstone. The farm, money? He did not care. There was nothing for him to worry about—Jacques Bertheau was officially alive!



ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF

Joe looked like a beet the hogs had been chewing on after Henry got through with him.



IRON HEELS

By OWEN CAMERON

AFTER Henry had gone, the sheriff carried Indian Ointment and bandages and a chunk of raw beef in to Joe Bowers. The sheriff always tried to make his prisoners comfortable, because they were also his constituents. Joe sat on the edge of the bunk and cursed when the sheriff touched his face.

"You look like a beet the hogs been chewing on," the sheriff said. "How come you let a

little man like Henry beat you up this way, Joe? I always heard you were a tough one."

"He lit into me when I wasn't looking," Joe said through swollen lips. "Besides, I wasn't feeling so good. He took advantage of a sick man—but that's Henry, every time."

"Still, you put up a good fight. I didn't hardly recognize Henry when he brought you in."

"That ain't the point," Joe mumbled. "Henry's two-faced—he's skeptical, and anybody who trusts him is a fool. Ain't I always said so?"

The sheriff agreed absently. He was thinking that some day he would like to arrest one of those city gangsters. The kind that refused to talk.

Joe held the raw beef to one eye, glaring at the sheriff from the other. "Henry's always been sneaky! Look how he was when him and me and Abby was kids. Like the time I was sick and he took Abby to the school picnic. Oh, I walloped him, and you'd think he would see he wasn't wanted and stay away, wouldn't you? But not Henry! Minute my back was turned, he'd be around pestering Abby again. He even wrote to her when he was away at college!"

Joe brooded for a moment and then burst out, "I figured those professors and such at the college would take some of the brashness out of him, but you can see how they did. Why, they even got him that big ranch in the valley to manage! All I got to say is, the man who owns that ranch must be a fool—unless Henry was lying."

"I don't think he was lying," the sheriff said mildly. "When his father died, he came back to the farm with a pretty good stake."

"How do you know he got that money honest? And another thing—the bank lent him a thousand dollars! When I wanted to borrow a miserable hundred dollars to get me a new car, they wouldn't even listen, but they give Henry a thousand! What kind of a way is that to run a bank?"

"I guess they figured Henry was a safe investment. Best farmer on the mountain, so they say."

"Oh, Henry was lucky for a while," Joe admitted. "He fooled Abby, too. Before he'd been home a year, she told me I better not come around any more, her and Henry being engaged to get married. I didn't pay no heed to her, Abby being kind of flighty at times, like women are before they get six-seven kids to tend. But a little later Henry come along and told me the same thing. How do you like that? After I'd been keeping steady company with Abby ever since her old man got stove-up and couldn't do no more than yell. I almost give Henry the licking he deserved, right then and there, but he walked off before I had time to think—and I was getting a little tired of Abby's cooking, anyhow."

"Hold your face still," the sheriff ordered. "I'm trying to get some ointment on your cuts."

"Ointment? Ain't you got any chewing tobacco? Oh, put it on. What do I care what happens to me?"

"You can't beat Indian Ointment," the sheriff said. "Henry and Abby figured to get married the year he burned out, I heard."

"If you believed Henry. There was some hinted like I was mixed up in that fire, but I wouldn't do nothing like that. Though who could blame me if I did, after what he'd done to me?"

"Lost pretty near everything, didn't he?"

"Just about. I expected folks would wake up and see he was no good, but the bank give him a long extension, and neighbors lent him tools and feed, and everybody went around saying they'd have to see poor old Henry through the winter." Joe removed the beef from his eye and shouted at the sheriff, "So they took the food right out of my mouth for him! I'd been halfway promised that deputy game-warden's job, and I didn't put in no crop at all, figuring on that seventy-five a month. And they give it to a man who borrows money he can't pay back and steals other people's girls and practically accuses me of setting fire to his ranch. Just what kind of a way is that to do?"

THE sheriff smiled. "I guess a lot of people on the mountain bought licenses that never did before. Henry's honest."

"I never bought one," Joe said. "It was no more than my duty to go around and explain to folks that Henry wasn't fitten for the job. He's clumsy as a cow and short-sighted without his glasses. He always wears those big, heavy boots with iron taps. You could hear him a mile, plowing brush like a bulldozer. But there wouldn't nobody listen, so I thought I'd just show them."

"I heard something about that," the sheriff said.

"Everybody in the country did," Joe admitted complacently. "I used to pack those doe-heads down to Henry's and pitch them over the fence to his hogs. About once a week he'd come hunting me. I used to hide in the brush where I could overlook his house and then follow him. I didn't have to track—I'd follow by ear. Them iron boots of his would grind and rattle on the rocks like tractor-lugs. When we'd get well out in the brush, I'd fire a shot in the air and then circle him. It certainly was comical to see him try to stalk me—just about as quiet as a sow being run by dogs."

"I guess he took the job serious," the sheriff said. "Don't get that beef too dirty, Joe. It's supposed to be supper for an Indian down the hall."

"Some days I'd keep him out all day," Joe went on. "When I did kill a deer, I'd leave the offal where he'd see it. One time he set down beside the guts of a doe I'd shot and cried like a baby. I seen him!"

"It was you started calling him 'Iron Heels,' wasn't it?"

"On account of the boots," Joe said. "I had everybody on the mountain laughing, the way I'd tell about him hunting me all day while I was behind him. Last week Abby and him come in the store while I was there, and Henry knocked over a stand of axe handles. I jumped up and says, 'Almost got me, Iron Heels, sneaking up that way.' The folks in the store laughed right out, some of them. Abby, she says, 'How long you going to be a fool, Henry? I don't know as I want to marry a laughing-stalk.' Henry bustled up to me, and for a minute I thought I'd have to lick him, and then he says, 'No, there's only one way to settle this.'"

"Catch you with venison out of season, huh? Henry is kind of stubborn, I grant you," the sheriff said.

"Stubborn? You mean sneaky!" Joe cried. "Let me tell you. This morning he came out after me and I was waiting. I had just fired a shot in the air and was circling around him when I jumped a yearling. I could hear Henry pounding along, he was that close, but I couldn't resist. I hit the deer too far back and he run off, towards Henry. I cut over to a rocky point and looked down. There was Henry, stopped to listen. The yearling come out of the brush, pretty near gone, and lay down about a hundred feet from Henry. He looked at it for a minute and then went on up the hill, and it come to me that he was too dumb to know a well deer wouldn't lay down in front of a man that way. I waited until he was out of sight and then come down, figuring to get the liver, anyhow, so he'd be sure to know I killed the deer.

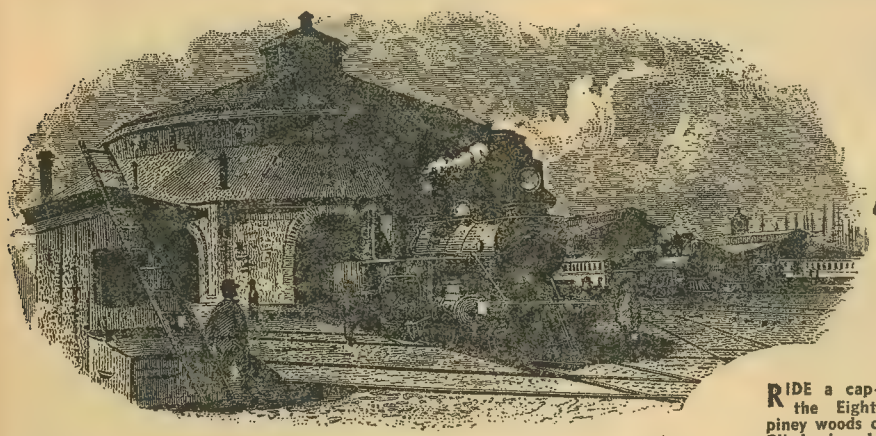
"All the time I was gutting it I kept listening, thinking Henry might wake up and start back, but I never heard a sound. I finished, and turned around for some dry leaves to wipe my hands on, and by God, if the little sneak wasn't standing there watching me! I jumped up and hit him, but like I said, I wasn't feeling myself, and my foot slipped and I fell down. I come near to busting my ankle, but you think Henry cared? He made me stand up, though it pretty near killed me, and then he knocked me down again. And when I wouldn't get up so's he could take a mean advantage of me again, he lifted me up and hit me. You call that fair fighting? I should have been in bed, but he—"

"Wait a minute," interrupted the sheriff. "I guess I missed something. How did he get behind you, without you hearing him? Were you asleep, or what?"

"No, I wasn't asleep. I just wasn't expecting any of his underhand tricks. But it shows you what you get for trusting a man like Henry. You think I can make folks understand it? No, he—"

"But Joe! How did he manage to get there behind you?"

"The little skunk took off his shoes!" Joe cried. "He came sneaking back in his stocking-feet!"



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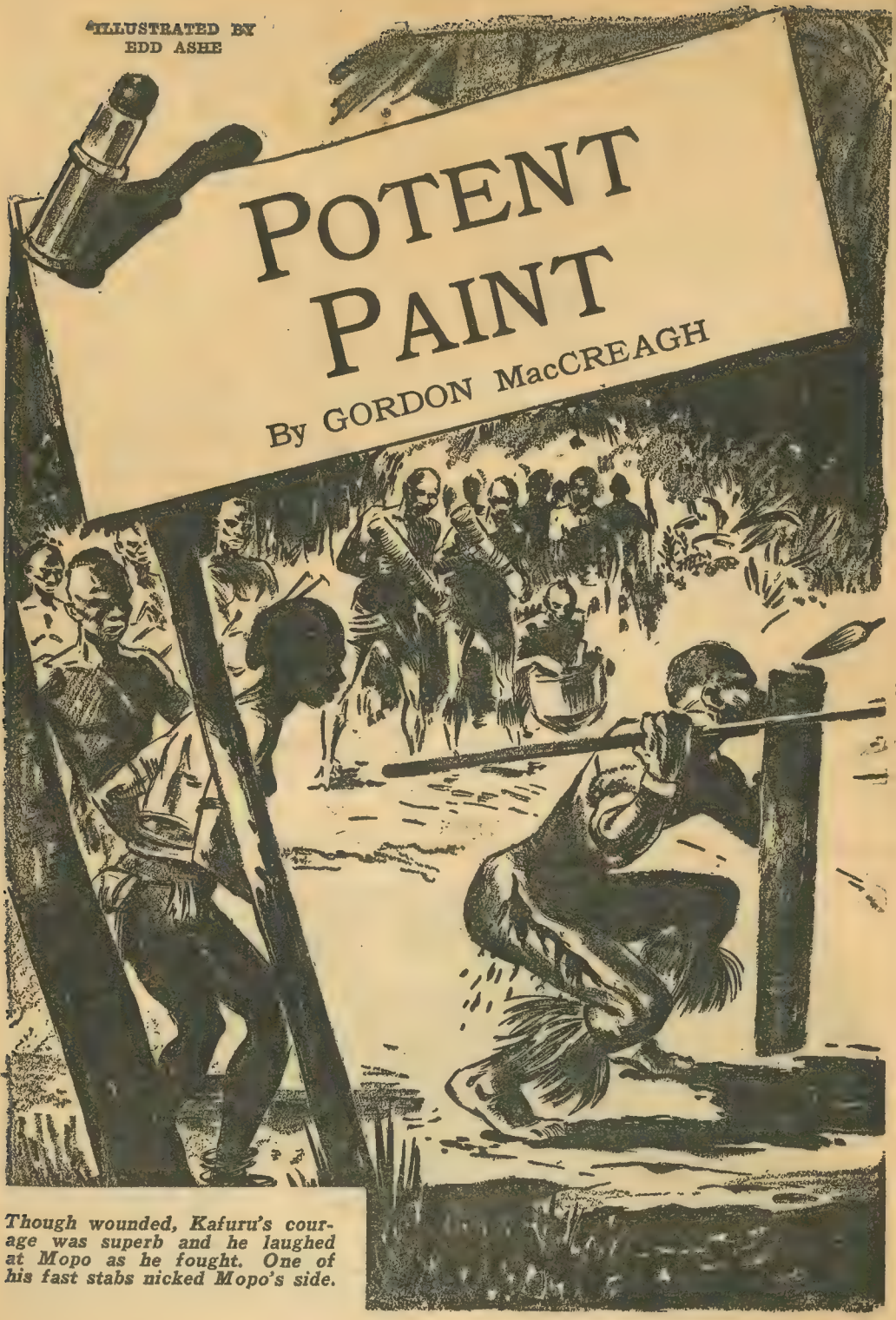
POTENT PAINT

By GORDON MacCREAGH



Though wounded, Kafuru's courage was superb and he laughed at Mopo as he fought. One of his fast stabs nicked Mopo's side.

I AM only a lipstick. I am no fabulous African diamond that you would expect to be coveted by the world's loveliest women and fought over by strong men who would die to win a lady's favor. I am worth, with my imitation gold tube and all my high-pressure advertising, just one dollar.

And yet, it was the fabulous Prester John of Africa who said that "The worth of a spear or a horse or a bead is measured by how much a strong man desires it." Of course, Prester John in his day didn't know anything about lipstick, just as I didn't know anything about

my so deadly power over life and death until I went to Africa.

Worth a dollar, I said. What I really mean is that a dollar was the perfectly fabulous price at which I was priced in America. I am actually worth about ten cents. I don't mind confessing my humble beginnings—not now. My manufacturer mixed up about half a million of us in the same vat with the same materials, and some of us went in plain paper tubes to the five-and-ten trade, some had a little cheap perfume added for the department stores, and I was in the batch that got musk and a gilt tin tube and a fancy name for the beauticians. "Harem Lure" he called us, and his ad men wrote up inspired fiction for us in the women's magazines. I am really just a dime lipstick. But my *worth* is measured with some of the deadlier diamonds.

My dazzling career began when so plain a person as Nurse Janie Banks saw the ad in a magazine that took six months to reach M'Buni. M'Buni, as you know, of course, is one of the great chain of airports that have mushroomed all across what used to be Darkest Africa, to refuel and service our American route to India and China.

Not so long ago, the Bunani tribesmen used to run screaming into the jungles along with the elephants and other wild things when the huge transports roared low over the trees to make landings. But now they are quite sophisticated. Some of the braver warriors will come right into the camp, driving their women with loads of firewood. Yes, Africa progresses.

But the elephants and things have moved away and M'Buni swelters in its horrible isolation, a revitalized pinprick on the map, seven hours' huge jump from Mai Duguri, over the ancient route that used to take the old slave safaris three months.

Nurse Janie Banks didn't know anything more about M'Buni than I did before I got there, so she was delighted at the chance to go. A very good-hearted and a rather frustrated sort of girl was Janie. I could feel quite a sympathy for her. "Plain Janie" the glamor cats up in the big base hospital called her; and so, when the call came for M'Buni, she knew that she would benefit by the fact of the competition being practically nil.

You know how it is with these girls. Or at all events I do. I don't know very much about Africa yet, and perhaps I never shall, for African psychology is complex. But I know everything about women and their never confessed impulses. We all do. It is inherent in the nature of our make-up.

And Janie was quite right, of course. In isolated M'Buni, full of lonely men far from home, she was one of the sought-after few rather than a neglected surplus in the crowd whose nerve-straining overtime labors drove them to the relief of fevered off-time romance.

Amongst the pursuers was Captain Jimmy Hart of the maintenance staff. A nice boy and as eager as all the rest of them to win a girl's favor. So that when Janie saw that inspired ad and was sure that Harem Lure was an absolute necessity to her ensemble, Jimmy Hart just about held up one of the transport pilots on a small repair job till the pilot desperately promised he would jettison cargo and write lipstick on the must list of his very next trip, and at the head of all the clandestine favors that those ferry boys always have to smuggle along for importunate friends.

By the time I reached Africa, in sheer cost of overhead, as my manufacturer would have sordidly reckoned it up—captain's pay, pilot's pay, gasoline, maintenance and loss—my cash value was already building up to some importance. But I am not one to count worth in terms of money. My function deals with human emotion, with desire. I am worth how much somebody wants me; and in Africa are strong men who fiercely want what they want.

There was quite an overflow of emotions upon the occasion of my presentation to Janie. I liked her at once; and I couldn't at all see why those base-camp competitors had nicknamed her "Plain." Mostly on account of the rhyme, I suppose. But you know the feminine proverb: "Give a girl a bad name and hang her on the line." Janie, it is true, was no beauty to stop an ATC man in his tracks; but she was a nice, plump, wholesome girl, if rather naive in her inexperience, and she'll make a very nice wife for young Jimmie Hart—if something African doesn't kill him off because of his insistent disregard of local dangers that so many of our boys think is necessary to keep up their show of Yank courage.

Jimmie could hardly hold himself till Nurse Janie got off duty that evening. When she finally did, he took her outside of the great barbed-wire enclosure—not too far—into the desiccated African plain, and they sat on a tall ant hill like the roof of a hut and Jimmie produced my package as ceremoniously as though it might have contained a diamond ring. Though what has a diamond got, I'd like to know, that I haven't got?

Janie unwrapped me and she fairly bubbled over with thrill. She had to try me on at once, of course, and, though I say it myself, I added a few hundred percent to her beauty in that unflattering brassy glow of the last sun.

AT B'Muni, the sun goes down behind an almost solid dust wall as big as a brass tray of kaffir-corn *chumo* mush, and the Bunani people say it is a good thing it goes down so far a way beyond the waters of Lake Tchad; otherwise that fire that they see in the red sunsets would reach them and burn up all their villages. And with the afterglow, the

hyenas come out of the *dongas* to see what has died during the day and they howl their hoarse complaints that it is never enough; and the big *bundi* bats with their three-foot wingspread soar like black-devil gliders over the banana tops; and sometimes there is a faraway lion; and if you think there is no romance in those circumstances, you've just never been young and hungry for a nice home girl in Africa—that's all.

Janie looked at herself in her make-up mirror and said, "Jimmie, it's exactly what I've wanted—it's what I've needed all my life."

"Why, this wonderful lipstick," Janie said. Which was true, of course, and one of my purely physical attributes. So then they both laughed and all constraint was gone, and after that they didn't care about me or the dusty sunset or the world or about anything else but their two selves. The pleasing smoothness of their getting together was a tribute to my more subtle psychological faculty and I was very glad for them.

I was not offended. They were good children, both of them, and I wish them well. I passed out of their lives to more important

Mopo used to escort his mother and two aunts as they carried milk to the little hospital.

affairs, but I shall always remember them as innocent instruments of my rise to deadly power.

I passed, I mean, out of their immediate contact; but they still remained within my orbit, and I vitally affected their love and their very lives. I was interested to watch the subsequent phenomenon of my Janie. There was nothing new about it and she was too honest ever to analyze her own impulses. But they were so amusingly transparent to one of my hereditary profession. Like so many of those simple-souled girls, having gotten her man, the little feminine artifices of allure ceased to be important. Janie was absorbed in the all-embrac-

And Jimmie was inspired to the cue. "That makes it exactly fit, because you're what I've always wanted and needed."

Janie was too simple and straightforward to be arch and play on the obvious, "What, always?" theme. She just leaned into his arms. It was as simple and honest as all that, and I do take a little passing credit to myself for a nice clean job. Jimmie kissed her breathlessly and hard, and when she was able to come out of it, she said, to cover the little, natural confusion of the first time, "Why, it doesn't come off!"

"What doesn't come off?" Jimmie didn't have any awful lot of experience himself.

ing wonder of her love, and so was her Jimmie. Lipstick for added adornment—even so potent an accessory as Harem Lure—was unnecessary. Those two never saw anything but each other's eyes, anyhow. Janie accordingly let me lie in a drawer. I sometimes think the world is all the better for the simple Janies.

Note now the extraordinary observing faculty of the primitive African, who, like the animals, must watch everything that happens in order to keep alive. Here was where Mopo the herdsman realized my potency in the shaping of love and life and death. Mopo was a strong man who wanted with all a primitive man's desire the things that he wanted.

He was a herdsman of the Bunani people. In scorched M'Buni, the civilizing influence of agriculture has not come, and the people have remained nomad herdsmen of lean, tick-ridden cattle and innumerable lop-eared goats; and you know, I'm sure, that the nomad peoples have always, perforce, been warriors.

This Mopo was a fine, strapping young buck who used to escort his mother and two aunts as they carried milk to the little hospital. He would leave his spear sticking in the ground outside the barbed-wire fence, and the gate guards let him in along with the burdened women. Janie always had a smile for the three old crones and a nod for the tall escort who was too proud to work. And Mopo observed that this fair-haired girl once used a red man-hunting paint and now no longer used it—Janie and her Jimmie would both have died had they known how Mopo, as well as most of the wondering Bunani adolescents, lay like lions in the tall grass and watched their every tryst outside the gates in the warm dark.

Mopo accordingly caught a M'Fawi interpreter by the ear and brought him before the white *dummoseli*—a word that you will hardly recognize as *demoiselle*. M'Fawis are Tchad shore grain-planters who are willing to demean themselves with the menial chores of a white-man camp. Through this interpreter, Mopo had Janie understand that she owned a paint, a super-beautiful war paint as red as rich blood. Therefore, said Mopo, since she no longer needed this paint, he would like to buy it from her and he would pay four cows.

Since worth is not gauged by mere cost, I felt that this price was a fitting compliment to my growing power; because for four cows, a Bunani warrior, if he can fulfill the other qualifications of manhood, may buy himself a wife.

Janie laughed and wanted to know what in the world a stalwart young man like Mopo could ever want with a lipstick; and Mopo, quite as honestly as Janie herself, went into the ingenuous explanation of his desire.

He had selected the girl of his choice, he said, and she was as beautiful as a young calf, her eyes were as staringly prominent as a night lemur's and her skin was the texture of a ripe yam. Therefore, in order to qualify himself before the council of elders as a full man, fit for marriage, he needed this superb blood-red man-hunting paint for the ceremonial killing.

Still Janie didn't understand the full significance of the thing. "But, good heavens! Why lipstick?"

Well, Mopo rambled on in the meticulously circumstantial way of all savages. In the old days, the witch doctors used to make a quite nice red paint and sell it to the young men; and then, as effete modernism crept in, the half-caste French-Arab traders used to bring in a foreign paint that was superior to the local *junju* berry stuff and didn't wash off so easily. Mopo's was but a sad repetition of the old story of honest vegetable dyes succumbing to chemical colors. Quite lately, Mopo went on, since this war that had interfered so much with old tribal customs, no more traders came, and it was beginning to be almost impossible for a young man to get painted with the ceremonial designs and go out and kill his man and prove himself a fit person to get married and beget a new generation of strong men.

Even then Janie didn't get it. It was too fantastic. Here, in a modern American airport, this talk about killing a man in order to marry a girl who looked like a yam! She would never understand the funny superstitions of these naked black men—none of the American boys who had been there for two years made any pretense of understanding them. And what would she do with four cows? Heavens! If this queer stalwart youth wanted a lipstick so badly, why, she would give it to him. A really kind, good-hearted girl was my naive Janie. I was sorry to see her generosity bounce back on her so tragically.

There is no word in the Bunani dialect for 'thank you.' Mopo told the interpreter, "Tell the great white chieftainess that my woman, when I have married her, will come and be her servant and she will wear the teeth as a necklace." And he wrapped me in a banana leaf and carried me away as reverently as—well, as a diamond.

I was coming into my true worth and I must confess that I thrilled with the sense of my destiny.

Mopo showed me to the yam-faced girl and told her, "Look. As red as a man's blood. And see, it makes a clean, strong line, and the wonder of it is that it does not wipe off." He didn't say 'wash off,' because Mopo, of course, never washed. He cleaned himself with butter, which, if you don't know it, is just as good as cold cream. "Never," said Mopo, "has there been so wonderful a paint."

And in that, he was quite right, too. I must give that much credit to my manufacturer. Harem Lure is really the last word in lipstick.

"Moreover," said the girl, "it has a magic scent that impels a woman to give her all." Which was just what my manufacturer had intended.

"But," Mopo had to remind her, "the tabus are very strong. I must first kill my man."

"Yes," the girl had to agree with stifled breath, "you must first prove yourself and obtain the sanction of the elders."

MOPO accordingly went to the witch doctor and paid him a good cow for his purification, which was an elaborate business of three days in a dark hut with much muttering and the burning of noisome things and the swallowing of various boluses of worse things; and the witch doctor repeated the rules that every young Bunani adolescent already knew.

He must eat no meat until the thing was done. He must subsist upon milk that had been smoked in a gourd to keep away the evil spirits that spoil milk. He must spear his man honorably from in front. And, above all, the ceremonial designs must be clear and accurate to show that the killing was no sordid murder. And the witch doctor, too, marveled at the superior quality of my white-man-created man-hunting characteristics.

In fine bold line, then, he painted in the lion's eyes on Mopo's broad chest and the mark of his village across his belly—to show where he lived and ate; and the mark of Mopo on his thighs—to give him fleetness to run his man down. It was the finest job of the killing design ever done in M'Buni.

Mopo showed himself to the girl and she smelled him all over and rolled her eyes in ecstasy. But she took strength from his staunch manliness and spurred him on to ambition.

This wonder-paint, she told him, was too good for the killing of some mere scrawny farmer from around the Tchad shore. He ought to make it some fighting man worthy of his spear, so that much honor would accrue to her before the elders.

Some of the better diamonds have similarly stimulated women's imagination, and strong men have died.

Mopo looked at the girl with wondering admiration and, "Yes," he said. "So speaks a warrior's woman. A fighting man, at least." And Mopo stalked forth to find a man worthy of me.

The M'Fawi interpreter came babbling to Janie to tell her that the wonder-paint that she had given Mopo had made him *wasimbari*, a lion looking for his kill; and Janie laughed at the fantastic thing and told Jimmie; and Jimmie laughed and said, "Queer ducks, these Wogs. I suppose it's one of their play-acting dances. Wish we could get to see it and maybe get some snapshots. Only, I suppose it'll be at night."

Any petty official of French Equatorial Africa could have told him that this thing was no game. It was true that, during the quiet years of peace, the colonial administration had inaugurated a campaign of suppression of the more sanguinary native customs, but with the current disruptions of war and its ennoblement of killing, along with the withdrawal of so many law-enforcement officers, native ambitions were rising again to return to that good African way of life that, while not the American way, has its points.

Janie laughed with Jimmie and said, "Man-hunting with a little old lipstick! Don't these people just slay you?" Many a word spoken in jest . . . What did this naive child think lipstick was for, anyway? And man-hunting, of course, is a matter of degree, governed only by geography and temperament.

My effect upon African temperaments was most gratifyingly stimulating. When Mopo reported to the yam-complexioned girl that worthy warriors amongst those soft Tchad shore farmers had become practically extinct—and the ceremonial victim, naturally must be found outside of his own tribe—she gazed upon him darkly and offered the burning thought, "Why need it be just a warrior? With so perfect a

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Janie gave the witch doctor a metal sterilizing tray with a lid that would make the finest stew pot in all Africa.

killing paint, why not a chief?" Truly feminine.

Mopo thrilled to the daring of his woman. "Yes," he breathed. "A chief would bring great honor to both of us. I would be marked for leadership amongst the young men." And then Mopo's own ambition caught fire from the woman's and he came to the ultimate daring.

"Why not a white man?" He looked at her with burning eyes.

The very thought had to be whispered, for it was almost a tabu. In the old days, the white men had built up the inexorable law of the sacredness of their own kind, as do all law-enforcement agencies. Any killing was bad, they said, and it was punished more or less if the killer could be caught without too much trouble. But one who killed a white man was relentlessly run down and hanged in public. By this prestige alone did their select few rule the savage thousands.

But recently, with this war, the white men had themselves introduced a most extraordinary propaganda. To kill one kind of white man remained a wicked sin, they insisted; but there were other kinds of white men, they said in their desperation, who could be and decidedly ought to be killed. The aftermath of this propaganda will remain a headache to the white men in Africa—as of course will all propaganda leave its disillusion everywhere.

It was all very confusing. Because to Mopo and the other young men whose imaginations had been stirred to good hunting, all white men naturally looked alike.

Mopo stared at the girl in the hot dusk and the girl stared at him and she suddenly pushed close. They said it together, "Yes, a white man!" And the girl's breast heaved up against Mopo's and she said, "I will be the woman of a great chief."

They climbed to the top of an ant hill and they made plans.

"Every night," Mopo said, "a white man comes out of the wire *boma* before a bugle blows and he walks alone to their new wells to feed the machine that stutters forever and sends water to their camp."

"Is he a worthy one? Is he big? Is he brave? Will his killing add honor even to a trophy of his color?" The questions were logical to soaring ambition.

"Different men come, taking turns." Mopo again displayed the furtive observation with which these people from the edges of their wild state noted every least thing done by the strange superbreed that had come amongst them. "The one who comes this week is a small one. But I will watch as a lion watches for one who is big and strong, so that the killing will be an honor such as has been delivered before the elders for no woman in our time."

"Enye thillicki!" the girl rhapsodized. Which is the equivalent of, "My hero! This paint is a magic thing that stirs you to great deeds. Let it be soon; for the waiting for one such as you is difficult."

That, you will doubtless remember, is just about what little Gina said to Caesare Borgia when she coveted the Sforza diamond. My manufacturer would have thrilled, as I did, to watch my racing career.

Now the bold inclusion of a white-man trophy into the pre-nuptial requirement of proving manhood is not talked about so openly as the old hap-hazard business of getting anybody who might be available, even a farmer. But when deeds of great daring are in the making, their chances will be discussed over the camp fires wherever lusty young men herd cattle, and the news will leak around.

The M'Fawi menials were relieved at the removal of the immediate menace from over their heads, but they blabbered their squeals in the hope of winning their masters' favor. And the whole American airport let out a belly-laugh about it. Some crazy native planning to kill a white man because a nurse had given him a lipstick! Ho-ho-ho! Fantastic! Two hundred and thirty-eight of them in a modern military zone with armed guards everywhere day and night. It was like the old tales of Buffalo Bill and scalp-hunting

Indians. And they stated that firm American confidence against anything out of the ordinary—it couldn't happen there. Americans cling so patriotically to their fallacies.

The really fantastic thing about the whole set-up was that here, in French Equatorial Africa, there was just no experienced French official to tell them about Equatorial African customs. The airport, to begin with, had been established in the blank middle of nowhere, laid out by air engineers in accordance with the needs of each next enormous air jump. These airports across Africa are isolated little oases of America on foreign soil, as American as La Guardia Field, transported and set down bodily, and left aloofly alone by suspicious European rulers. The personnel consists of soldiers with a job to do, not ethnologists to study primitive local marriage customs. So they took the yarn in their laughing American stride. Bogey stories couldn't happen there.

But Nurse Janie had some small inklings of intuition about my powers and she was worried. She went to Jimmie, big-eyed, and told him, "Darling, please don't laugh, too. I wish you would take an escort."

And Jimmie laughed and asked, "Why should I take an escort?"

"Because," Janie shuddered close to him, "beginning this Sunday, *you* are on duty to go out and inspect the pump before taps blows!"

Jimmie shifted his big shoulders a little uneasily. But he was bound as fast by a soldier's conventions as ever was Mopo by his tribal customs. He said what he was bound to say, and he laughed as any other American would have had to laugh. He said, "But sweetheart, you wouldn't want the whole camp thinking I'm scared to go out on account of a wild yarn."

That's Yanks for you. And Mopo waited like a wild lion in the tall grass, as patiently and as certainly.

YOU will remember, too, the story of King Francis' diamond. When the king's messenger was commissioned to convey it to the Countess of Brègues, he knew that political intriguers would be on the alert to waylay him, but he had a high conception of the honor of a king's messenger and he went forth and was duly killed.

I was rather sorry, when the news filtered back to me, for young Jimmie. But his, after all, was the historic fate of puny humans when they get caught up in the great subtle forces of human desire, such as I. I could not help finding a certain grim humor in the thought of this man being doomed by a sort of Frankenstein of his own importation. Though I was quite pleased a little later to see him saved by a simple woman's love that gave her wit.

Amongst the things that I know about women is that they can neither reason with, nor ever quite understand, a man's queer conceptions of his private honor. Janie didn't try. But, being woman, she could understand the inexorable feminine influences that were spurring Mopo to ambition and she knew that such influences were never anything to be laughed off. So she didn't waste precious time at arguing with Jimmie about it. She appealed, simply enough, to another woman to find out what to do about it, and in desperate haste before next week's round of duty commenced.

She got the M'Fawi interpreter to bring her one of the firewood women, and the firewood woman told her the great universal truth, that all ingrained superstitions of all religions could be controlled by the priest of the cult. Therefore, the obvious thing would be to appeal to the witch doctor. The only alternative would be to kill Mopo's woman, who was the cause of his ambition. To kill Mopo himself would only divert it.

Well, now, for an American Christian nurse to get to a secretive African witch doctor would seem to be an insurmountable difficulty, as well as not very proper. But since the alternative was killing Mopo's woman, Janie didn't even consider the existence of religious scruples. And you know—or at least I do—how women of any creed or color can get together when it comes to handling men.

The firewood woman agreed to act as go-between, and she was able to report the very next day that, if presented with a suitable gift—not by any means as a bribe, but as a mark of faith—the sorcerer would contrive to curb Mopo's blood-thirst for at least one full week.

The gift to evidence Janie's faith in the man was a metal sterilizing tray with a lid that would make the best stew-pot in all Africa. The witch doctor, of course, never inquired how Janie got it, and he made good on his part of the bargain.

He sent for Mopo and did his necessary mumbo-jumbo, and he told Mopo that it had been revealed to him that this superior man-hunting paint called for a small addition to the blood-red design and that then its potency would require an even rarer specimen of ceremonial victim. No less than a white man with red hair.

Fantastic again, isn't it? But among these simple savages it is quite easy, if a man has but faith in the infallibility of his priest, to convince him of almost anything. Mopo went about with bloodshot eyes, ravening for his kill; and it was true enough that within the barbed-wire enclosure there was a flaming-red major of Flight Operations.

The firewood woman reported to Janie that Mopo's problem now was to get the major out from behind his shelter. She made no secret

(Continued on page 142)

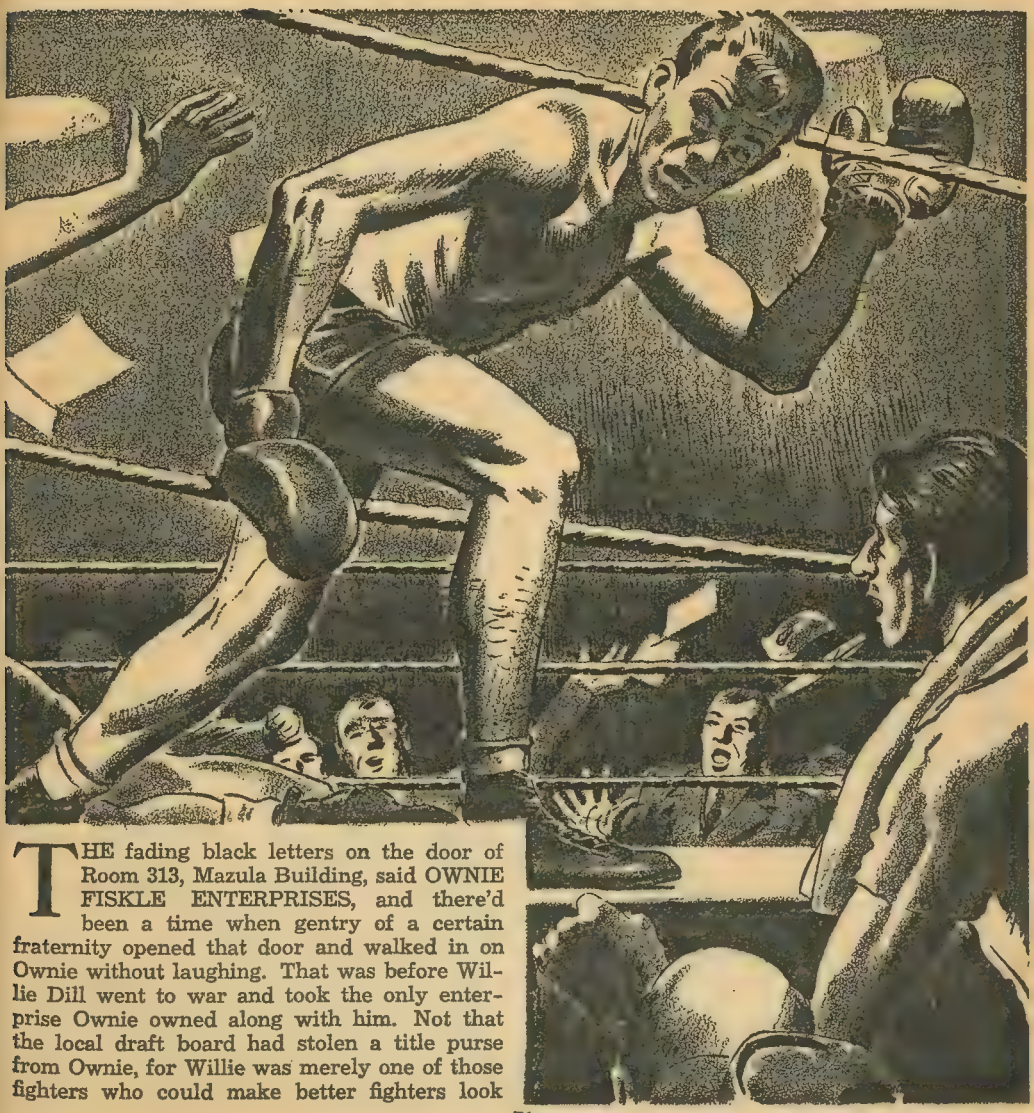
ILLUSTRATED BY
JOHN MEOLA

IMPERSONAL

Willie's voice sliced through the racket. "Ownie, I am gettin' t'hell outa here. The bus leaves in—" He went out of the ring and began swinging at excited customers who sought to impede his progress.

APPEARANCE

By JOE ARCHIBALD



THE fading black letters on the door of Room 313, Mazula Building, said OWNIE FISKLE ENTERPRISES, and there'd been a time when gentry of a certain fraternity opened that door and walked in on Ownie without laughing. That was before Willie Dill went to war and took the only enterprise Ownie owned along with him. Not that the local draft board had stolen a title purse from Ownie, for Willie was merely one of those fighters who could make better fighters look

bad, being so bad himself, and the clients always packed the clubs in which he fought because they wished to be on hand the night he finally got murdered, or when that wild haymaker of his ultimately landed on a hapless chin.

A week after Willie left, Ownie put on some fights in the Bloomsburg Arena, and when he counted the house at the end of the semi-final, he realized for the first time just how valuable an asset Willie Dill had been, for the arena was filled mostly with the press, Annie Oakleys and dismal echoes. Things went from bad to much worse and finally Ownie Fiskle had to swallow his pride and get a job. He mumbled some unkind words about Mr. Hershey and went to work six hours every night in a little plant that made parts for bomb sights, and he lost his nice manicure and most of the doughnut of suet that ringed his meridian.

But today Ownie was at his desk in Room 313, looking like the Ownie of old. He wore his best suit with carnation and had taken a complete refresher course in the barber shop around the corner. There was a box of cigars and two bottles bearing intriguing labels on his desk. This was V-day for Ownie Fiskle. This was the day Willie Dill was coming home. Ownie Fiskle Enterprises was arriving on the five o'clock train.

Ownie heard huried footsteps out in the corridor and he quickly touched off a big cigar, adjusted his carnation and began riffling some papers he had resurrected from a dusty file. When the writers walked in, he did not look up right away—not until Eddie Busk of the *Morning Call* made extravagantly with the top layer of seventeen centers.

"Lay off, moocher!" Ownie said sharply. "Only two to a customer, you know that! How y' Maxie? What's new, Charlie?"

"That's what we're here t' find out," Charlie Binns of the *Chronicle* grinned, and picked up a bottle of rye. "Like old times, Ownie."

"Leave us all have a drink," Ownie said. "Then we'll drink a toast t' Willie Dill."

Charlie Binns said, "You got his APO card, Ownie? Willie's on his way to occupy Tokyo? Good luck, Willie, an' watch them bums' low punches."

Maxie said, lifting a paper cup, "We're in your corner, Willie."

EDDIE BUSK was trying to think of something appropriate when Ownie Fiskle sniffed loudly. "Would I be celebratin' his bein' shipped to Hirohito-land?" he asked in a high-pitched voice. "I'm tryin' to tell you Willie Dill is let out of the army for good."

Maxie shuddered a little and not because he had taken his rye neat and at one huge gulp. "No, Ownie. Not that."

"I guess you think that's funny," Ownie said in a very injured tone. "Willie was and still is the bes' copy you bums ever had. What's the boxin' been around here without Willie?"

"Shamefully orthodox," Charlie Binns said, recovering slowly. "Why was Willie let out? Why was he considered inadequate?"

"Who said he was?" Ownie countered. "It is only that the army doctors don't think Willie has the right frame of mind to wipe up the end of this war. They have a bunch of men in the army like we have in the boxfightin' business to see nobody goes into a ring out of shape. They got long names I don't try t' pernounce."

"Psychoanalysts, Ownie," Eddie Busk offered. "They specialize in ailments above the ears."

Maxie and Charlie Binns howled and Ownie looked hurt. "Oh, maybe he was slow to catch on. Willie"

"Not in the clinches," Maxie said, and Eddie and Charlie howled again.

"Awright," Ownie said, picking up the bottles and the cigars. "I ain't treatin' you bums no more. Go over t' that louse, Sully Neff, an' see what you can chisel out of him. Tell him what will happen to his prize meatball—that whosis you bums keep writin' up like he is MacArthur or somebody—now Willie is comin' back."

"We was just kiddin', Ownie," Maxie said, wiping the brine out of his eyes. "But I don't guess Sully has a thing to worry about. Willie has been away over a year and he can't remember as far back as the firs' time he shaved. This Kid Nimitch will knock Willie for a loop."

"Yeah?" Ownie sniffed.

"Yeah."

"Willie has been toughened up, don't forget," Ownie argued. "Them obstacle courses an' that Hell's Bottom. After Willie has crawled on his belly under live bullets, he should be afraid of this Nimitch?"

"Yeah," Maxie said. "You are whistling outside of a cemetery, Ownie. An' I can see Willie's headstone an' it says Willie was born—when was he born, Ownie?"

Eddie and Charlie howled again. Finally, Eddie said, "You remember the time Sully foxed you, Ownie? Made you put up five C's to guarantee Willie would show the night of the fight with Vinnie Goff?"

Ownie made out he could not hear. Eddie said after a laugh, "Sully just happened to meet Willie doin' his road work for the fight an' he told Willie where there was some nice mushrooms growin' in the woods, an' does Willie love mushrooms, Ownie. And what the toadstools did to Willie! So Willie doesn't show for the fight and Sully collects the five C's. I guess nobody will ever forget that one, and there is plenty of them to tell about Willie—"

"You git out of here, all of you!" Ownie yelled. "It's a fine way to talk about a guy who wears the uniform of—"

The door was suddenly pushed open and a voice that sounded like a meat saw cutting through bone shook the ash off Ownie's cigar and dropped it inside his vest. "Howya, Ownie!"

Ownie cried out, "Willie!" and bumped Maxie out of the way and ran to drag Willie Dill inside. He kept saying, "I didn't expect you so soon, Willie. How come, Willie?", but Willie Dill just said, "Huh?" four times.

"He's got cotton in his ears," Charlie Binns yelled.

"Oh, yeah, I fergot, Ownie," Willie grinned. "I flew in from Detroit an' I was sure lucky t' git on a plane."

"It is lucky for you you look so much like a St. Bernard," Maxie said. "How you feelin', Willie?"

Willie said, "In the pink," and shook hands all around and then leaned against the file cabinet and gazed lovingly at Ownie Fiskle.

THE uniform Willie wore would have looked more glamorous if it had been hanging from a hook in a closet, and Willie and army chow seemed to have disagreed, as he looked much scrawnier than he had the day of his induction. His mammoth GI shoes were curled up at the toes and he wore his garrison cap strictly on the bias. "Now you can git me a fight, Ownie."

"Just like that," Charlie Binns said, and snapped his fingers. "How much boxfightin' you been doin', Willie?"

"Don't answer that, Willie," Ownie said severely. "I'll ast the questions, an' in private."

Eddie Busk said, "They want t' be alone. Who would think they cared?"

Ownie opened the door. When the writers marched through, he said, "Scum!"

Alone with Willie, Ownie asked flatly, "You done any boxfightin' sincet you was away, Willie?"

"Some," Willie said vaguely, and picked up a bottle and a paper cup.

"Put it down," Ownie snapped.

"Who is this Nimitch, Ownie?" Willie, pointing, put the bottle down.

"A new meatball Sully picked up whilst you was gone, Willie. We will sidestep him fer awhile."

"Huh? I was always the champeen here, Ownie. I been a soldier, so you want I should run?" He scratched his head. "That Sully! My stummick was never the same since them mushrooms."

Ownie began thinking aloud, albeit ruefully. "Would that fight pack 'em in, though? We'd draw fifteen hun'red at top prices. We could use the money."

"When could I fight this Kid Nimitch?" Willie asked.

"Whoa," Ownie said. "I kind of thought we'd have a couple warmup fights, Willie. To see what you got left. There is a bum you licked once. Harry the Horse. But I don't guess the doctors would like that, Willie, as Harry just had a gall stone took out."

"Get me this Nimitch," Willie said. "I need the dough for this readjustin', Ownie. I'm as good as ever."

Ownie shut his eyes. He poured himself a drink. "You ain't ready, Willie,' he said.

"Fer what?"

"T' fight Nimitch, o' course!" Ownie said a little impatiently. "Look, give it to me straight about why you was let go by the army."

"They used big words, Ownie," Willie said. "I couldn't explain 'em good," and he began circling the cramped confines of Ownie's office, throwing punches at an imaginary opponent. Ownie grabbed Willie and sat him down after Willie knocked over a bottle of rye with a wild

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swing. "It was somethin' about me bein' somebody who when he throws a right, does not let his left hand know what he is doin', Ownie."

"I guess them army doctors are plenty smart," Ownie admitted, and pawed at his face with his hands. He had seen Kid Nimitch fight and of course had seen plenty of Willie's wares and he found the comparison downright odious. Yet, Willie's style of fighting *might* bother even Nimitch, for Willie had always considered the gloves he wore only a small part of his fisticuff equipment. Willie's elbows were very large and knobby and his head was hard.

"I can git in shape in a few weeks," Willie said. "If I should duck this Nimitch I wouldn't be able to stay in this town, an' I would just die if I had t' leave Bloomsburg, Ownie."

"You most likely will if you don't," Ownie sighed.

"How's things been with you, Ownie?"

Ownie shuddered perceptibly. He said, "You talked me into it, Willie. We will fight this Nimitch." He felt the need of another drink and had it quickly.

"I'll murder him," Willie said.

"We gotta build you up all over ag'in," Ownie pointed out. "In the army you beat some good fighters like Battlin' Snogsky, Young Miskowitz an' Kid Hormone. An'—"

"Never heard of 'em," Willie said.

"Of course y' didn't," Ownie groaned. "It's the buildup. It—"

"But I went eleven roun's with Joe Louie."

Ownie said, "Well, that's someth—" His mouth popped open. He reached out and clutched at Willie's OD lapels. "Willie, what was it you just said?"

Willie grinned, reached into his pocket when Ownie let go. He took a clipping out and handed it to Ownie Fiskle. Ownie flattened it out on his desk and looked at the half-tone of Willie Dill in fighting trunks. Just above the photograph was the screaming masthead *CAMP BEAZLEY BUGLE*. Under Willie's picture it said, GOES ELEVEN ROUNDS WITH THE BROWN BOMBER!

Ownie's breathing sounded as if he had been caught alone in a haunted house in the dead of night. He began to read aloud:

"Private Willie Dill of Bloomsburg, Pa., is the only man since Billy Conn to have gone eleven rounds with Joe Louis. Interviewed by the sporting editor of the *Bugle*, Willie took his laurels lightly. 'Clean livin' is the answer', the camp lightheavy said. Although it was an exhibition bout, Joe took off the wraps and gave the audience a treat they will long remember—" Ownie looked lovingly at Willie. He went over and hugged him and said, "You sweetheart! Why didn' you tell me?"

"Joe ast they didn't put it in the real papers, Ownie. I promised him I wouldn' shoot my mouth off about it."

"How did you ever do it, Willie?"

"Wa'n't easy," Willie said. "Ownie, he has an awful punch!"

Ownie got a little worried. "Willie, was it after the champ finally tagged you, the doctors find out you think two ways at the same time? What day is this, Willie?"

"Friday, Ownie."

"Not bad," Ownie gulped. "Just missed it by a day. I—"

The phone set up a clatter and Ownie snatched it off the cradle. Sully Neff's disagreeable voice trickled into his ear. "I hear Willie Dill got back for good, Ownie. Oh, lucky you!"

"Speak for yourself, bum," Ownie said.

"How soon will he fight my boy, Ownie? It is the fight fan's dream an' you know it has t' come true." Sully was very excited.

"Where do you want your meatball buried?" Ownie countered.

"Then your enterprises will fight us, huh?"

"Yeah. An' that wa'n't funny," Ownie sniffed.

LATE the next afternoon, while the fight fans of Bloomsburg let the news of Willie's return sink in, Ownie's lightheavy stripped himself of OD's and donned fighting pants, and Ownie winced at the laugh that greeted his hero when Willie fell through the ropes. The army had done little to correct his unloveliness, for there is a limit to what even the army can do, and it was apparent that the brass hats had given up on the battle of the bulge around Willie's waistline.

A dusky mauler had at Willie Dill, who proceeded to tie into his man with his old windmill and waterfront style that had always confused as well as stitched his audiences. Willie's open gloves splatted loudly when they landed, which was seldom, and most of his serious work was done in the clinches. Here Willie used his head, but not for thinking, and soon the dusky boy staggered out of a Donnybrook near the ropes, stepping high like a high-school horse, and seeing nothing about him even though his eyes were wide open and very bright.

"That's enough," Ownie said. "Too much the firs' day ain't good. Nice goin', Willie."

"Are you kiddin'?" somebody asked, and Ownie pivoted to glare at Charlie Binns.

"Willie was never fancy an' you know it," Ownie said fretfully. "Go bet on Sully's bum if you crave t' lose your other shirt."

"Most of the dough in town will be bet on Nimitch," Charlie said. "Willie could not win even if we give Nimitch opium before the fight."

"I do not hear you talkin'," Ownie sniffed, and he went to make sure Willie got his shower.

Ownie saw Kid Nimitch work out a few days

later and got a little nauseated, as even he had to admit Sully's fighter was the most promising battler Bloomsburg had ever seen. "Well, what do you think, Ownie?" Sully Neff said just after Nimitch froze a sparring mate stiffer than Norwegian resistance. "This town deserves a title holder an' some day—"

"Willie was born here," Ownie said, for want of a better return. "He won't let no foreigner belt him out. Lots of folks love Willie too."

"Lots of 'em don't figure it t' be a contest, Ownie," Sully said unsmilingly. "It's got me worried. Well, it's nice you'll have a nice purse t' retire on, Ownie. Hey, Kid, come an' meet Ownie Fiskle."

"How y'?" Nimitch grinned.

"So, so," Ownie grunted. He studied the Kid's proboscis, various parts of his physiognomy, and noticed the lump of putty that served as a right ear for the Kid. Well, this meatball could be hit. He said, "It'll be a nice fight."

"You bet, Mr. Fiskle. How is Willie?"

"Snafu," Ownie said, having heard the word somewhere.

Charlie Binns brushed past and he said, "Keep whistlin', Ownie, as you have not passed the cementery yet."

"Scum!" Ownie snapped.

All arrangements were made satisfactorily to all concerned and the fight cards blossomed out in the windows of Bloomsburg's business section and they proclaimed in big red letters WILLIE DILL vs. KID NIMITCH 10 ROUNDS. The betting was brisk, with all the smart money on Nimitch, and those who backed Willie were influenced mostly by sentiment and the fact that Willie had served in the armed forces of his country, albeit quite peacefully. Of course there were those who always dreamed of an upset and the golden harvest it would bring.

Ownie was worried, and on the spur of the moment one day he decided to experiment with psychology, although he had not the vaguest idea as to the meaning of the word. Against this Nimitch he had to use every angle, concrete or otherwise. He was walking into Arbusto's Tavern not far from the fight arena when a taxi came up to the curb and let Sully and his fighter out.

"I thought that cab stopped with a jerk," Ownie said.

Sully nudged Kid Nimitch. "Look what the raddio missed."

"Inside I got somethin' to show you," Ownie said. "Willie did do some boxfightin' in the army. Jus' a little."

"Try an' scare us," Sully grinned. Later, after he'd had a drink, he stared at Willie's picture and the story under it. Sully seemed to shrink inside his loud plaid suit. "It's a gag, Ownie," he said. "We'll check on it."

"Go right ahead," Ownie grinned. "But like Willie said, if you give that too much publisticy, Joe will come here personally an' beat out a lot of brains. I'll have another beer, seein' I was invited in here."

Sully tossed the clipping at Kid Nimitch. After reading it over a dozen times, the fighter looked a little ghastly. 'This is no fake, Sully. What you been givin' me?"

"I still say Willie is a bum!" Sully yelled, and ordered a double rye.

"So he is a bum. So he goes eleven roun's against Joe Louie," Nimitch mumbled. "Some bum!" He got up and said, "I am goin' over t' work out, Sully. I am takin' no more chances, nor no more beer."

Ownie reached for the clipping. Sully said,

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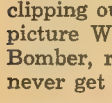
"I had the boy slowing up on his trainin', Ownie, an' let him have plenty of beer so's the fans would git a contest. Thanks for tippin' me off." Sully Neff got up and hurried out after Nimitch and left the check with Ownie. Ownie guessed he would stay there and get very drunk. Him and his big mouth! He spread the clipping out and read it over and over, tried to picture Willie staying eleven rounds with the Bomber, round by round. Somehow he could never get as far as the third.



THERE are times when it is very discouraging trying to diagnose the way of a man with a maid, a snake on a rock, a bird on the wing and why fight fans suddenly sour on a much ballyhooed exhibition of fisticuffs. The ticket sales in Bloomsburg were stagnating, and so Ownie Fiskle and Sully Neff, mutual bankrolls at stake, became bosom pals for an hour or so on neutral ground.

"It is like we had billed Max Shmellin' an' the ju-jitsu champ of Yokohama instead of Willie an' the Kid, Ownie," Sully griped. "You gotta do it. Give that about Willie an' the champ t' the papers, Ownie."

"Joe wouldn't like it. He would kill us all,"

"The champ is a very swell guy as everybody knows, Ownie," Sully pointed out. "And how far out of town do Bloomsburg rags go?"

"I dunno," Ownie said, shaking his head.

"Jus' forty percent sale so far," Sully said. "Looks like they all figure Nimitch will slaughter Willie early. We gotta do this, Ownie."

"Awright," Ownie said. "But I gotta funny feelin' . . ."

The story that appeared in the Bloomsburg papers the next morning drove the war communiqués to a neutral corner. Ticket sales stepped up until Sully and Ownie were guaranteed a sellout. But Willie Dill did not share Ownie's frame of mind when he came into the hotel room that night with a paper clutched against his chest. "I told you he won't like it, Ownie. I am scairt, as I could not stand even one more punch from Joe. I would end up bein' no person at all, much lest bein' two like the army says I am. There's somethin' I didn't tell you, Ownie."

"You let me worry," Ownie said. "You did go eleven rounds with Joe?"

"Look," Willie said. "I did—in a way. But there was more t' the clippin', Ownie. I left it out on purpose. I fought Joe four roun's in the mornin' an' was knocked clear outa the ring an' into a general's lap. In the afternoon, we had another ex'bition an' I was flattened like some linoleum in three. Then at night, before a big crowd, Joe plasters me a'gin in the fourth an' I spent all the next day in the infernery. So I go eleven roun's—"

Ownie clamped his hands to his head and rocked from side to side. "I mighta known somethin' was screwy, Willie. Why didn't they send you t' Soypan or some such place?"

"You shouldn't of printed it, Ownie."

"Well, we can't pick up split milk," Ownie sighed.

"We could if we was cats," Willie said ruefully. "I am plenty scairt, Ownie."

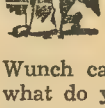
Right up to the morning of the day before the big fight, Willie looked like a frightened faun and he worried off another pound he could not afford to lose. Sparring mates had fun belting him around and he wore a patch of adhesive big enough to cover a half-dollar over the bridge of his nose. All this was going to please Kid Nimitch very much indeed. Ownie exuded plenty of vital sap himself and hied to his office where he locked himself in. He hoped that a certain heavyweight champ had sailed for New Caledonia far, far away. Always, when Ownie needed his wits sharpened, he would stare at the razor-blade sign on the roof of the Bloomsburg Hotel four blocks away, and so this day he stared extra hard and soon he swung his feet off the window sill and became very calm.

On the way to the little side-street family hotel, Ownie Fiskle stopped in at a drugstore and had himself a long-distance phone call and some coke with aspirin. Leaving, he started whistling, then thought of Charlie Binns and unpursed his lips.

Willie shook violently as Ownie taped his hands. "You are makin' a mountain out of a moleskin, Willie. Joe should waste skin offen his knuckles on a meatball like you?"

"I guess he wouldn't, huh?" Willie said. "I been silly, Ownie."

"Yeah, keep your chin up, Willie. I mean—in here," Ownie said, and took a long deep breath.



THE roar of the crowd came washing along the narrow corridor outside and it rose in great volume when the door opened and an excited promoter named Harry Wunch came in waving a telegram. "Ownie, what do you know?" Wunch yelled. "A wire just come from Camp Kelso from a colonel. He says for us to make room for three seats at ringside as they'll be here in about forty minutes. Who do you think one of the guys is?"

Willie Dill hopped off the table and made a frightened squeak. "Joe Louie," he forced out.

"Now, how did he know?" Wunch yelled. "What a break, Ownie!"

"Yeah, in Willie's neck," Ownie said in a shaky voice. "Git out of here an' git this fight on quick before there ain't any, you bum!"

"Where's my pants?" Willie cried. "I told you, Ownie—"

"You gotta fight. I'll git you out there if I have t'conk you an' carry you out sittin' in a pail," Onie screeched. "Let him slug you, Willie. Think of the publisticy?"

"What time it is?" Willie asked.

"You got plenty of time 'fore Joe gits here," Ownie said.

Wunch hopped into the dressing room again. He caught Ownie Fiskle by the arm. "Look, I talked t' Sully an' his boy. Nimitch agrees t' carry along until Joe comes. The champ has gotta be able t' see most of the fight."

Willie's eye widened, then he clamped them shut and said, "Let's go, Ownie," and a sickly smile played around his big wide mouth.

The crowd gave Willie a great hand because he had gone eleven rounds with the Brown Bomber. Willie got his long legs tangled up in the ropes. The oily shine of sweat was on his angular lump face. Ownie put his robe around him. Willie looked over at Kid Nimitch and shuddered slightly. There was enough hair on Nimitch's chest to hide a Jap sniper. The Kid smiled at Willie and nodded knowingly. The announcer kept introducing people of importance and otherwise. Willie gnawed at the tape on his hands and sweated off another pound. He kept ogling the clock.

Ownie said, "They gotta stall for time, Willie."

"They better leave me some," Willie said.

Finally the ring was cleared. Willie went out and shook hands with Kid Nimitch and looked down at three vacant seats behind the grinning Charlie Binns. He knew he had things to do before they were filled. He went back to his corner knowing this round was not against Nimitch but against the heavyweight champion of the world. He kept his feet moving and looked at the clock while the announcer dragged out the name of the ref, the judges and the knockdown timekeeper. Willie had just seven minutes left to catch a bus when the bell rang.

Willie plowed into Kid Nimitch in the center of the ring, his long arms flailing wildly and using his open gloves against Nimitch's ear and against his ribs. Nimitch said in a clinch, "You know what we gotta do, Willie!"

"I know what *I* gotta," Willie chugged out, and pasted Nimitch with a slapping blow that hid the entire left side of the Kid's face for a few painful seconds. He whaled Nimitch with a left that banged against the fighter's brisket and made a sound like a plank hitting a sack of oats. Nimitch spun half around, went into a kind of adagio dance and clutched at the ropes. His eyes were milky and they seemed to be looking for Sully Neff. Willie waded in and the ref intercepted him briefly. "Listen, Willie —you forget . . .?"

"I am hard of hearin'," Willie said. He looked at the clock, then tore in at Nimitch. He needed a few minutes leeway. He needed them to get his pants and street shoes on. Nimitch, while the crowd went crazy, reached blindly for Willie to hang on, but Willie brought a big glove right up from the floor and glued it under the Kid's chin with a sickening, splatting sound, and Sully's fighter came off the floor too, did a half-spin in midair, then seemed to fall apart. He was a very limp heap of flesh and black trunks and gloves when Willie trotted to a neutral corner. "Count 'im out!" Willie yelled over his shoulder.

The ref slowed the count but he saw there was no bringing Kid Nimitch around until somewhere near his next fight, and he finally spoke the fatal number and gestured helplessly toward certain gaping citizens outside the ring. Sully climbed in, shaking his fist at Ownie. "You crossed us, you bum! You—"

Ownie yelled, "My boy don't stall for nobody in no fight. If I told the public . . ."

Sully got down beside Nimitch and spoke to his boy like a mother. Willie's voice sliced through the racket, "Ownie, I am gettin' t' hell outa here. The bus leaves in—" He went out of the ring, leaving his old bathrobe hanging over the ropes and he began swinging at excited customers who sought to impede his progress.

"Willie . . . wait!" Ownie screamed. He struggled through the crowd to the dressing room but when he finally got there, there was no sign of Willie Dill. Ownie ran into the night, heading for the bus terminal four blocks away.

Willie was boarding the bus, one gallus up and one gallus down, in his undershirt, and wearing one shoe when Ownie got a grip on the seat of his pants. "Willie," he called out between great gasps for air, "Willie, I gotta tell you!" And he managed to tear Willie clear of the moving Fleethound and fall in a heap with him. "That telegram, Willie. Listen, it was a—"

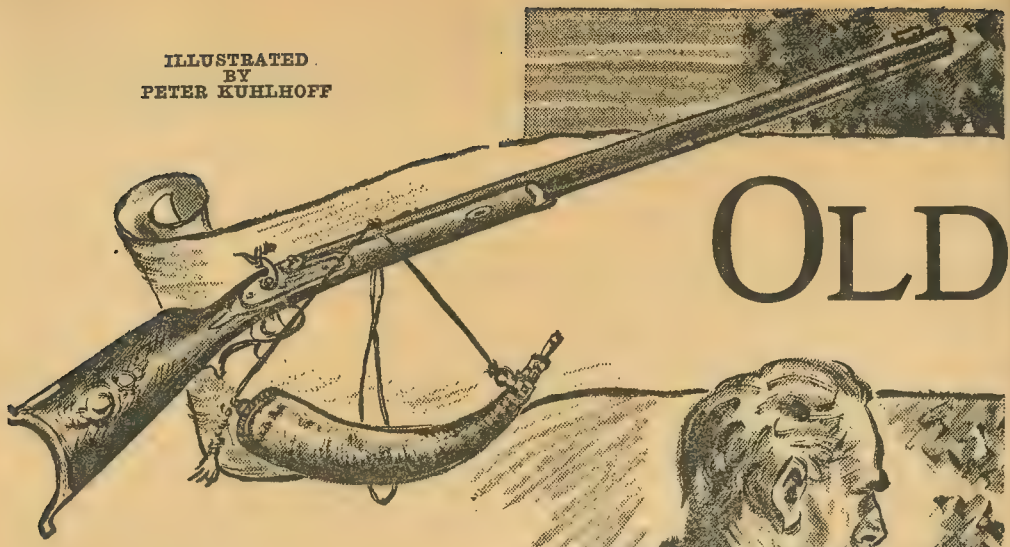
Willie, getting to all fours and shaking himself like a wet dog, said, "He wouldn't come t' see two bums fight, Ownie. He is after me an' you shoulda not done this."

"Joe won't git here tonight, Willie, nor on no other night," Ownie said. "Try an' understand, Willie. That telegram—like them mushrooms."

Willie stared at Ownie. He suddenly started grinning, when a big policeman came up and nudged Ownie with a big billy stick. "All right," the policeman said to Ownie. "You caught him, so git him out of here. Who is he and what did he do."

"Who is he?" Ownie said, getting up and brushing himself off. "What did he do, the man says?" There was a proud ring to Ownie's voice. "He is just a fighter went twelve rounds against Joe, is all," and he took Willie by the arm and hurried away with him, for the noise of the spilling arena crowd was very close.

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF



OLD

By RAY MILLHOLLAND

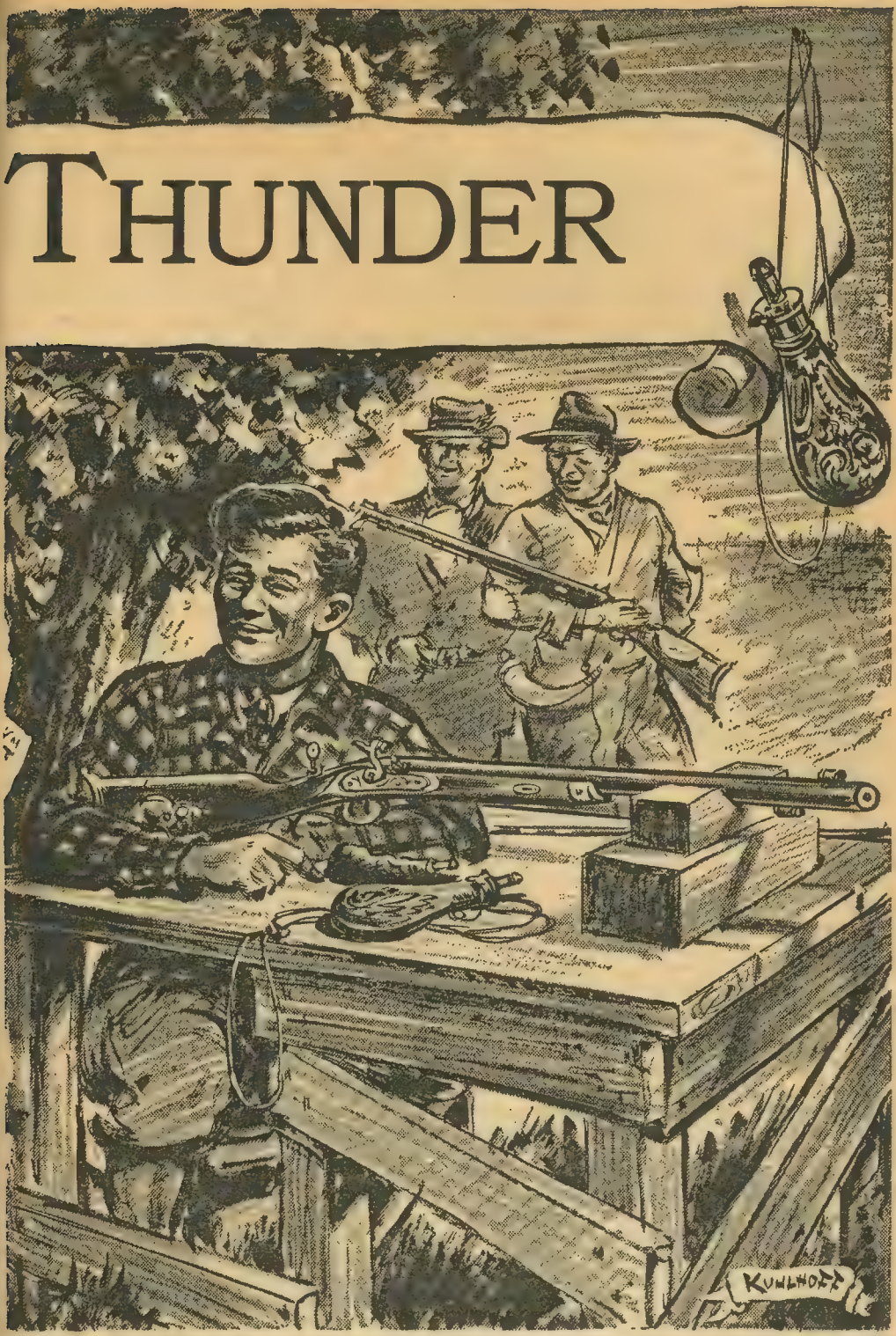
MYRTLE wood makes a pretty stock for a muzzle-loading rifle. But it is mean wood to work with, because if your chisel digs in a hair too deep it is the easiest thing in the world to spoil maybe two or three days' work a man has already put on it. Then all he has is a chunk of stovewood, and just about as expensive stovewood as anybody in his right mind would never think of using.

If Cal Dyer, working in the late afternoon sunlight which streamed through the dusty window of his gun shop, was not actually thinking about stovewood in so many words, it was because thirty years at his trade had trained his hands and eyes not to let his chisel dig in. He was busy at the moment putting the finishing touches to a new muzzle-loading match rifle for old Judge Lyle, who never could be found any nearer the Sycamore County courthouse on Saturday afternoons than Walt Klinger's farm, where the weekly muzzle-loader matches were held.

Cal was putting every bit of skill he had into

The big rifle was set up on the shooting bench with its muzzle resting in the V-notch of a hardwood block. Cal watched the boy load the rifle and prepare to fire the first shot. He made no suggestions.

THUNDER



the judge's new gun. He did that, anyway, on every gun he made. But he was also putting a little bit of his own heart into the job, too. Because—well, there just wasn't a finer old gentleman in the world than the judge. Some of the rich city sportsmen who could afford to toss away four or five hundred dollars, buying up different close-shooting muzzle-loading rifles in hopes of getting the gun of them all, would have gladly paid Cal double the price he had named to build this gun for the judge. In fact, lying around, stuffed in an old chip basket and weighted down on the bench by a bar of lead, were at least fifty letters from city sportsmen who wanted to buy guns from Cal.

He never bothered to answer any of these letters. He had it figured out if he kept on making guns for the next forty years—which wasn't likely because his people all seemed to die off before they were ninety—that he would still have friends he would like to make guns for. So strangers were out of luck.

Just at the moment when the slightest mischance of his chisel would ruin the job, Cal heard the front door of his shop open and close. Heavy, confident footsteps thumped the shaving-littered floor.

Without looking up, Cal knew who it was. Nobody but Fabe Primble came stomping into a man's place like that—like he had a first and second mortgage on everything a man owned, right down to the bootjack under his mortgaged bed. But since he owed no man a red cent and disliked Fabe heartily in the bargain, Cal didn't feel called on to ask his visitor howdy, but kept right on working.

Fabe reached over to strike a match on Cal's best double-cut mill file to light his pipe. That was bad enough to do to a file a man used only for draw-filing a barrel to give it a satin smooth slick; but to go striking a match when the floor was a foot deep in paper-thin shavings just waiting for a match head to fly off and burn the place down was too much for a man to take.

"Nobody smokes in here when I'm on wood," said Cal. That would have been about all the rebuke he would have administered to a thoughtless stranger, but Fabe Primble had to have a hint broke over his head before he could understand it. "One spark in those shavings and thirty guns and close on two thousand dollars' worth of tools would be gone up in smoke."

Without apologizing, Fabe Primble refrained from striking the match and put away his pipe.

Cal tested the edge of his chisel by plucking it expertly with the ball of his thumb, then gave it a light stroke or two on a hone stone.

"There's nothing to dicker over I can think of," he said, pointedly.

"No, there ain't," agreed Fabe Primble, and put in a lot of mean triumph in the way he said it. "I got my price for Old Thunder. Now I'm here to collect that bet you made, about nobody being fool enough to pay me forty dollars for it."

"I'd have to see it in writing first," said Cal. He decided the present was no time to risk spoiling the beautiful myrtle-wood stock on Judge Lyle's new gun, and laid aside his chisel.

"What's more," added Fabe, ignoring the slur, "I'm claiming the other part of the bet, too." He drew out his drawstring leather pouch and counted out twenty silver dollars, clinking each one onto the pile with gloating satisfaction. "There's your twenty. Now hand over that Ballard with the Circasian-walnut stock and the 4-x telescope on it."

Cal pushed his chisel further from him, lest he yield to the temptation to use it on something that wasn't honest wood. He said, "Any time I take your bare-tongued word, it won't be in court and you with one hand on the Book and the other on a thousand-dollar bank note."

"Here's the writing to prove it," said Fabe, and spread out a page of cheap, lined tablet paper for Cal to read.

Scrawled in pencil, it read, "To whom it may concern. Today, I paid Mr. Faybe Primbull sixty dollars for his Old thunder muzzil loader gun." The statement was signed, "Todd Reynolds, jr."

Cal frowned accusingly at Fabe. "You mean you took a sixteen-year-old boy's good money for that worthless thing, that won't group five shots inside the end of a tomato can at ten rods?"

"That's his lookout," replied Fabe, callously. "At sixteen, I was trading mules and stock and taking my losses like a grown man."

Cal rejected the written evidence with a scornful eye.

"That's plain fraud. First place, neither the boy nor Widow Ackley, who's been boarding him while his paw is off in the Pacific, ever saw sixty dollars at one time in their lives. Second place, Widow Ackley would've tore your eyes out by now, if young Todd had give you sixty dollars for that no-good gun."

"How much is the going wage around here for a good strong boy like Todd Reynolds?" asked Fabe, obviously relishing the opportunity for giving Cal Dyer a thorough deflating.

"Scarce as help is, and for a boy who can drive a tractor, grease a windmill, pull a Model T down and put her back together in one day" —Cal stroked his chin, in an effort to persuade his conscience to turn a deaf ear to what he was about to say next—"I'd say thirty a month, and better board than you feed at your table."

"You stand convicted off your own tongue," gloated Fabe, producing a notebook and thumbing it to the proper page. "Todd Reynolds worked for me all of July and August, and up to the eighteenth of September, when he went back to high school. I made the deal with him he was to work all that time for sixty dollars.

We squared it by him taking the gun and giving me that paper you're looking at." He waved to the pile of silver dollars. "Now hand over that Ballard with the 4-x telescope on it. Or do I have to sue you in court for it?"

the thirty years he had owned it but what some avid collector of Ballard rifles would not have gladly paid him fifty dollars for his museum specimen of the gunmaking art.

With the supreme contempt of tight-lipped silence, he handed over the rifle. Then he turned his back and made a great racket over bolting the back door of his gunsmithing shop. Next, he put on his coat and hat.

Any collector would have paid fifty dollars for this museum specimen of the gun-making art. With the supreme contempt of tight-lipped silence Cal handed over the rifle.

CAL walked over to a solidly built cabinet, unsnapped a heavy padlock and took out a handsomely engraved Ballard-action single-shot .22-caliber rifle on which was mounted an old-fashioned but extremely fine telescopic sight. There hadn't been a day in

"There was a brass cleaning-rod for this with a deer-horn handle that had a little oil can inside," stated Fabe, still refusing to take the hint, that Cal was closing shop for the day. "I claim that as part of the bargain."

Cal looked him coldly in the eye.

"You'll have skinned many another dead horse for his hide and tallow before you get that cleaning rod."

"Well, you at least ought to throw in a box of .22 longs," argued Fabe. "Hollow points, if you got 'em."

"You've got your end of the bargain in your hand," stated Cal. "And my supper's getting cold on my plate, at home."

"It's pretty mean trading," grumbled Fabe, edging for the front door, "when a man lays down hard cash and can't get even a twenty-cent box of shells for good will."

There was plenty Cal Dyer wanted to say about mean trading just then. But his scorn was too high for the few words at his command to describe his feelings. He walked to the front door of his shop and held the padlock ready, while he waited in hard silence for Fabe Primble to leave.

Cal was still in this mood of utter disgust for his fellow man when Judge Lyle overtook his lagging steps as he walked down Poplar Street toward home. For all his seventy years, the judge's stride had to be shortened and slowed to fall in step.

The judge slipped a lean but firmly encouraging hand under Cal's arm and said, "A beautiful Indian summer evening in God's garden-spot of the earth, is no time to be stepping on your lip, Cal."

"Howdy, Judge," was all Cal could muster as a greeting to a friend he had known and respected since boyhood days.

The judge gestured with his free hand to the setting sun and said, " 'Lift thine eyes unto the hills', Cal. No man can feel miserable at the sight of that glorious canvas."

Cal glanced toward the sunset, frowning.

"Any day but today, Judge, I'd agree with you. But I can't help thinking that the meanest man in Southern Indiana lives just on the far side of that hill."

"I've held the same opinion for a good many years," agreed Judge Lyle, flicking a wondering look at Cal. "But that's strange talk from you. I didn't think there was a man on earth you couldn't find something good to say about or reserve judgement on. What has Fabe Primble been up to now?"

Cal told him, using sparse, chisel-sharp sentences. There was no need to go into a windy harangue when telling the judge anything about anything that had happened within a thirty-mile radius of Sycamore. The judge knew all the contributing circumstances involving the social and political lives of every registered voter in his bailiwick.

"If he had done it to a grown man, I'd have no call to feel hard on him," said Cal, ending his brief recital. "But to do it to a gun-struck boy, with no father around to see to it he wasn't skinned to his bones—"

"I've just come from Mrs. Ackley's," said the judge, in a tone which had the chill of bleak winter in it. "Another letter has come from Bob Arnold, the captain that Todd's father served under out in the Pacific. He's still missing." The judge gave Cal's arm an almost pleading pressure. "I think if you and Charity would drop in over there tonight for a few minutes . . ."

They parted at the next corner. Cal went on home. He ate his supper in somber silence. When he had finished, he got up from the table and went to the bedroom.

He came out in a few minutes, dressed in his best suit.

"We'll drop around to see the boy and Mrs. Ackley for a minute, mother," he said. "There's been another letter."

"Is it—?" Charity Dyer asked the question only with her eyes, as she began untying her apron.

"No, just another letter from Captain Bob Arnold," said Cal. "But no good news in it. Like the other three. Nothing final yet from Washington, so I guess it won't be cheating to sort of help prop up their hope."

Charity hardly came up to Cal's shoulder as they walked through the garden and across lots to the small cottage set on an unpaved back street.

When they came to the gate, Charity said. "You talk to Todd alone, papa. I'll visit with Mrs. Ackley."

Mrs. Ackley was lighting the parlor lamp when Charity knocked.

"I was just putting Todd's lesson books away," she explained, holding back the reed portiers for them to enter the parlor.

Cal remained in the tiny hall, looking up the dark, steep stairway.

"Todd up in his room?" he asked.

"Yes. He took a letter up there with him." Mrs. Ackley aimlessly turned over a book on the table.

"Mind if I go up?" asked Cal.

"He usually locks his door," said Mrs. Ackley. "I tried to get him to run over to your place for a visit, but he didn't answer. Just went upstairs, right after supper."

Charity said, briskly, "You run up and see Todd, papa. Mrs. Ackley and I will have a little visit together."

Cal mounted the dark stairs and tapped on a closed door.

"It's Cal," he said. "Come over to see the gun you traded for."

A KEY squeaked in the lock. The door swung back. The tanned strong face of a boy of sixteen appeared.

"Just heard you made a pretty sharp trade for Old Thunder," said Cal. "Been dickering for going on ten years for that gun myself. Thought maybe you could be persuaded to take a quick profit on your bargain."

"I got stung," said Todd Reynolds, smiling wryly but without malice. "I had it out to the

gravel pit, right after school tonight. It won't shoot a group worth a plugged jitney."

"Something blamed funny, then," said Cal, walking into the room with all the assurance of having received a cordial invitation. The gun was lying on the bed. He picked it up and ran his calloused palm along the barrel. "You know, I never let on to the man you traded with for this gun," he remarked with a confidential nod, "but I happen to know who made this."

"Somebody who wasn't very good, I know that," blurted out the boy. He took a target from his dresser and handed it over. "Look at the way it scatters all over the paper. You couldn't cover those five shots with a saucer. And at ten rods."

Cal stroked the barrel again with his palm. "I never told anybody about this before, Todd. But this is the first gun I ever made, after my father died and left me to paddle my own canoe as a gunsmith. I made it exactly like I thought my father made the close-shooting guns he was famous all over the country for. But I slipped up, some place. It never would shoot a tight group."

The boy blushed to his ears. "I—I didn't mean when I said—"

"That's all right. No harm done," said Cal, the corners of his eyes showing crow's feet. "A man's got to eat his own pudding. This is mine. But I've learned a lot about my business since I made this one, Todd. Fact is, I've got an idea I can work it over and make the closest shooting gun in these parts out of it. Be a favor if you'd let me try. Won't cost you a cent, either."

The boy smiled, but the pain in his heart showed through.

"Any time but right now, I'd let out a whoop louder than the whole cheering section of Sycamore High at a basketball game," he said. Then he handed a letter to Cal. "You knew my dad. I got this, today. I—I can't talk about it. But maybe I'd feel—"

"Know just how you feel," nodded Cal, breaking in. "Our boy, Dave, was missing over Germany for sixteen months. Nobody saw him bail out and no word from Washington about him. It was pretty hard hanging onto the idea it mightn't be as bad as it looked. . . We haven't told anybody yet, his mother and I, but Dave was in a German prison camp all the time. He'll be back home, almost any day now."

Cal, without looking at the boy, began reading the letter aloud.

Dear Todd:

This is your father's old captain writing you again. There is no further bad news about him. As I told you in my other two letters, he went off on a very special mission. All I can say about it is that it was right smack into the Jap's back yard. When your father volunteered for this job, I couldn't turn him down; he was the best shot in the company—in the whole Marine Corps, as any man in the Company would bet you at the drop of a hat. He was one of the best jungle men I have ever seen, and you see plenty of good ones out here.

Maybe I'm wrong to keep building up your hopes like this, but I just bet fifty dollars that Corporal Todd Reynolds will be back, one of these days, with valuable information and hungry as a wolf. He's just too smart for those Japs to hold, even though they may have caught him. So keep your chin off your collar, and I'll write you again.

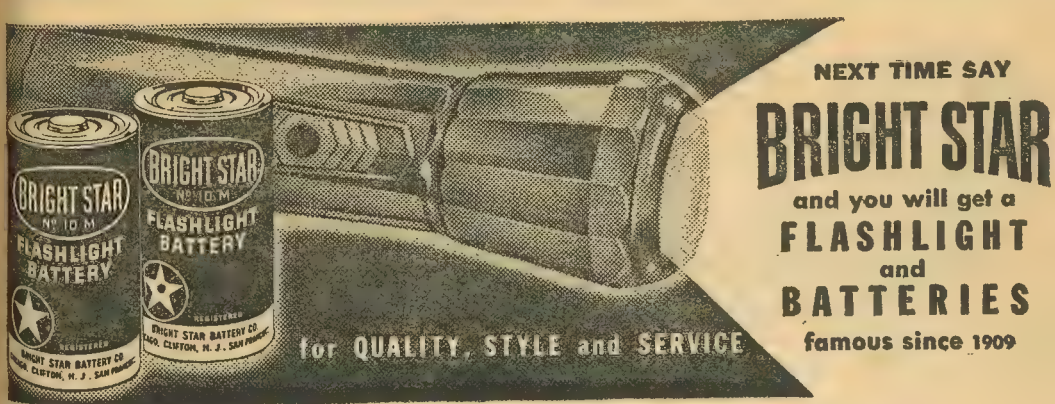
Sincerely,
Bob Arnold, another Marine.

Cal laid the letter on the dresser. "I'd keep that letter, Todd. It was written by the kind of man who is worth remembering."

He sat down on the edge of the bed, cradling the heavy muzzle-loader across his knees.

"Now let's talk about something we can do something about. We can't change what's going on, clear over on the other side of the world, no matter how much both of us want to. That's like worrying about missing a basket shot, after the game is over. Don't change the score one mark, does it?"

"No, it doesn't," agreed Todd, soberly. "I never made the first string of our basketball team until I learned to forget things like that."



"Now about Old Thunder, here," said Cal, slapping the stock of the gun in his lap. "It would be a big favor to me if you'd let me do just the opposite of what I've just been preaching. Will you let me take a second try, to cover up what I missed on my first chance?"

Todd's eyes brightened. "Do you think—I mean, well I was hoping to find a load for it, that would maybe shoot close enough so I could enter the match out to Walt Klinger's place Saturday."

"Surest thing," said Cal, standing up and tossing the big gun up into the crook of his arm. "I'll cramp down on it, first thing in the morning. We'll come ambling out to Walt's, day after tomorrow, with a gun that will lay 'em as close to center as anything that burns black powder."

"Could I . . ." Todd took a deep breath, for courage. "Could I watch you target it in, tomorrow after school?"

Cal scratched his head. "Now that kind of tangles up my plans. I figured you would sort of stay around the shop and keep an eye on things while I was over to the gravel pit, trying Old Thunder out."

"I'll be over right after the seventh period, at two-thirty," said Todd.

Charity did not ask about the gun Cal carried home that night. He was always carrying guns, and anyway she was interested in how Todd was feeling.

He told her about the letter and what he had said to Todd.

"I'm glad you didn't promise him his father would come back," said Charity.

"It was a big temptation," said Cal.

Charity squeezed his hand approvingly. "Everybody expects what you promise to come true."

"Mostly because I don't promise what I know I can't deliver," said Cal. "The Almighty must get pretty tired of hearing all the promises the politicians make for Him to fill."

But the weight of Todd's muzzle-loading rifle on his arm was an insistent reminder that if Fabe Primble was to get his dues on this earth, while a man was alive to see him hoiler and rave about it, it was poor business to leave that up to Providence. This business of asking the Almighty to bang your enemy with an avenging bolt of lighting didn't have much satisfaction in it, even if it happened. It looked too all-fired much like the same kind of an accident that could happen to a downright innocent man.

It was in this spirit that Cal was up early the next morning, to work straight through until two in the afternoon behind the locked door of his gunsmithing shop. No amount of insistent banging on it or pumping the latch could persuade him to stop work on Todd's gun for a single moment. Not even to take time out for lunch.

Shortly after two, he slipped the big gun into an old canvas cover and left his shop with a note hanging on the latch, "Back in an hour," and trudged across town to the gravel pit. He set up his target, then stepped off ten rods—which was the distance at which the morrow's match would be fired—and proceeded to fire a string of five shots.

After examining the target, he took a light hammer and a punch and tapped the front sight a hair more to the right, then fired two more shots. He gave the result a little nod of approval and returned to the shop, with the gun covered up in the canvas case.

TODD REYNOLDS was sitting on the limestone carriage step in front of the shop when he returned.

Cal read the hungry look in the boy's eyes and winked mysteriously as he patted the covered gun.

"Did you bring back the target? Can I see it?" asked Todd, eagerly.

"I burned it," said Cal, his air of mystery thickening. "But if Old Thunder don't cut at least one dead-center, tomorrow, it will be the man behind the gun, not the gun. But don't go gabbing that to anybody."

Todd drew in a relishing breath, his eyes sparkling with vibrant anticipation as he followed Cal into the shop. The look in his eyes faded rapidly to one of disappointment as he saw the gun put away in a cabinet and a heavy padlock snapped on the hasp.

"It's better, setting there safe against an accidental bump," explained Cal.

Todd hitched his school books higher up under his arm and tried to say it casually. "What time will we be starting in the morning?"

"Meet me here at seven," said Cal, still with that mysterious air. "We got a powerful day ahead of us, so don't stay out late tonight and blur your sighting eye with a movie show."

"I'll go to bed, soon as I get the wood in," promised Todd, and then he was off.

At five, the unpleasant aftermath to an otherwise very satisfactory day was about to catch up with Cal. But he had weighed the consequences the night before and did not chose to dodge the issue by locking up early and sneaking home through the alley.

At the last discordant stroke of the courthouse clock, Judge Lyle entered the shop with a brisk step and a cheerful countenance.

"Got my new gun ready, Cal? There's still an hour left to sight it in at the gravel pit."

Cal laid down a tool and turned his back to his bench, his arms folded across the mattress-ticking apron.

"She won't be ready, Judge. Nowheres near."

"Now look here," said the judge, in a tone of abrasive asperity. "When I was in yesterday, I told you not to bother putting a coat of var-

nish on the stock. I said I would shoot it the way it was. Now don't tell me you have, and it can't be handled."

Cal reached behind him and picked up the finished, full length stock for the judge's new gun.

"There's the stock. All fitted to the barrel and ready, except for the varnish." He waved to a jumble of metal gun parts on the bench. "Everything else ready but the barrel. I'll be all next week fitting up a new barrel."

"I saw, with my own eyes, the barrel for my gun, lying right there yesterday afternoon!" said the judge, and his pointing finger trembled with indignation. "Now what's happened to it?"

"You're not going to like it," said Cal, meeting his old friend's sternly questioning eye. "I got in a rush job this morning. Needed a new barrel—"

"You deliberately robbed my gun of its barrel?" The judge's wrath was almost beyond control. Suddenly he spied the pile of twenty silver dollars which Fabe Primble had laid on the bench the evening before and which Cal had not touched since. A scornful finger leveled upon the coins. "Whose money?"

"Fabe Primble's," answered Cal.

"Then sell him the lock, stock and butt-plate, too," snapped the judge, and stalked out.

Cal sighed and took off his apron. He had expected this would happen. When the judge got up on his ear, a slow-speaking man didn't have a chance in the world explaining himself. He swept up the silver dollars and wrapped them in his handkerchief to take home to Charity. That was an old rule. All silver dollars he took in were hers and no questions ever asked what she did with them.

Before eight the next morning, Cal's old car rattled into the shooting-match grove at Walt Klinger's farm. Todd got out first, tenderly nursing his big muzzle-loading rifle still in its soiled canvas cover. Cal brought along the folding shooting-bench and the bag containing the powder horn and the buckskin pouch of freshly molded and carefully trimmed balls.

Fabe Primble was already there, strutting around and showing off a new Ohio-made gun. He was offering to make a side bet with anybody that his closest shot for the day would cut nearer center than any other gun in the competition.

When Cal heard that, he walked up to Fabe. In his big hand were ten ten-dollar bills.

"Put your money where your mouth is, Fabe," he said, curtly.

Fabe backed off warily, to ask, "Name the gun, first."

"That wasn't part of your brag," said Cal, handing his hundred dollars to old Phil Tarney, the match judge. "You said any gun. I'm saying there's a gun here today that'll shoot the hind sights off yours. Now show your money."

"Fabe, you been talking loud and wild. Now you're called," said old Phil Tarney, holding out his other hand. "Either put up, or clear your hide out of here for good."

Big, broad-shouldered Walt Klinger, the owner of the land, nodded complete agreement.

Fabe Primble glanced uneasily around the circle of stern eyes fixed on him, then laid five twenties in the stake-holder's waiting palm. "I still think it ain't fair for Cal not to name the gun he's shooting against me," he grumbled.

Cal lifted an inscrutable gaze from a hickory nut he was pressing into the ground with the toe of his shoe and nodded to the end of the firing line where Todd Reynolds was setting up his shooting bench. "The boy's yonder. But just remember this Fabe"—Cal's eyes took on the hard glint of a newly tempered lock spring —"it's the gun you're shooting against. It may be my string that bests yours. Then again it may be the boy's—or anybody else's for who I put up the dollar to shoot a five-shot string with the gun."

Fabe's eyes began to waver as he saw Todd Reynolds strip the canvas cover from the familiar, long curly maple stock of Old Thunder. Then he turned abruptly and went to his own car for his prize Ohio-made gun.

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CAL walked over and squatted down on his heels beside the shooting bench at which Todd was preparing for his first shot. The big rifle was not the type which is fired from the shoulder while standing. It was set up on the shooting bench with its muzzle resting in the V-notch of a hardwood block for a muzzle rest. The toe of the stock rested on the bench in such a manner that the shooter's only concern was to properly load his gun, then adjust the wedges to line up his sights with the target. The match, in other words, was largely a test of which gun could shoot five shots into the smallest possible circle.

"I bought five strings for you, so don't worry about burning a little powder to get the hang of her," said Cal.

"But I only brought two dollars with me," said Todd. "I only meant to fire two strings."

"I'm paying for the entries. Shoot as long as you want to," said Cal. "If five strings don't get us a good string measure, I'll buy more."

Silently, Cal watched the boy load his rifle and prepare to fire his first shot. He made no suggestions.

"Am I doing it right?" asked Todd.

"Looks like your Dad doing it," said Cal. "And nobody ever did it better."

The boy's lips closed tightly but he made no comment. . . His finger gently caressed the hair trigger and Old Thunder spoke in his authoritarian voice. Then Cal and the boy walked down to the target and examined the neat round hole.

"Smack center!" exulted Todd.

Cal pulled a grass stem and pointed with it at the bullet hole. "Close, but it doesn't cut center. Try another and we'll see what happens, with the barrel a little warmer."

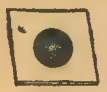
Todd fired three strings of five shots each before Cal so much as gave a second look at the target. Unostentiously, he laid these rejected targets on a stump well back from where Todd was shooting. One by one, the other shooters drifted over, picked up the rejected targets and, after giving them a shrewd appraisal, laid them down again, to hurry away.

When Todd had fired his fifth string of five shots, Cal took one look at it and said, "Take this one to Mr. Tarney and ask him to judge it for string measure."

Todd, who hadn't been within earshot when Cal made his hundred-dollar side bet, turned a beaming look on Cal and said, "I'm going to thank Mr. Primble for the swell trade he gave me . . . and apologize for what I was thinking about him, after I first tried it out, yesterday."

"You stay off forty rods from Fabe Primble," said Cal, gruffly. "And don't run off with the box of caps. I'm going to shoot my strings while Old Thunder's barrel has the right heat in it."

It was high noon when Cal finished his five strings of five shots each. He had saved just one target board, and this one he took up to Phil Tarney to be judged for string measure. The old match judge fitted a brass plug into each bullet hole and with a pair of needle-pointed compasses measured the distance between the center of the brass plug to the exact center of the target, which was represented by a knife cross on the target board.



WHEN old Phil Tarney had finished measuring the accumulated distance by which Cal's five shots had missed cutting the exact center of the knife crosses, he said dryly, "Better keep on shooting, Cal. There's another board in that's got yours beat."

"That's the best I'll ever do, if I kept shooting all day," said Cal, stooping over to flip through the stack of target boards leaning against the stump Phil Tarney was sitting on. When he came to the one Todd had turned in, he took a second look at it, then straightened up. "No, I'm through shooting for the day."

"Maybe this will change your mind." Fabe Primble elbowed him aside and handed old Phil Tarney a target board. "This one is only a starter. But I'll bet it has anything shot today beat hands down!"

The match judge squinted an eye at the target board and nodded. "Mmm—looks like you've cut both cross lines with every shot, Fabe. Been many a match shot here this would take at least three of the five choices and string measure to boot. But it won't get you any place money, today."

"Show me a board any better and I'll chaw it down raw," said Fabe. Then becoming aware of Cal's sardonic eye regarding him, he hastily amended that rash promise. "I got to see a better board, and measured right while I'm watching you," he said to the match judge.

"Let me have your brass gauge plug again, Cal," said old Phil. He then sorted out Todd's target board and went through the performance of remeasuring each bullet hole for distance from exact center of the knife crosses. "There you are, Fabe," he said, transferring with his dividers the string measure from Todd's board to Fabe's. "A sixteen-year-old boy has you beat a full quarter inch on string measure. You better go back and buckle down to real shooting."

Five o'clock came. Fabe Reynolds was still shooting. All the rest had long ago given up all hope of beating the string measure turned in by Todd. At five-thirty, the cap nipple blew out of Fabe's gun and the shooting ended.

"I claim the match ain't over yet," argued Fabe. "My gun's broke and I claim time to go to town and get it fixed."

"Where!" drawled a twanging question. It

was Judge Lyle, who had appeared late at the match without a gun and who had avoided all contact with Cal, behind whom he was standing when he spoke.

Cal cleared his throat and spoke directly to Fabe. "About the only place I know of is my shop, Fabe. Just say the word and we'll head for town."

OLD PHIL TARNEY pulled out his bulbous silver watch, gave it a glance, then studied the position of the sinking sun. "I'll set here waiting, long as there's daylight. But a man would be a fool to waste the sweat, r'aring into town and back out here. In another forty minutes, the light won't be worth two candles under a tub, set off forty rod for light."

"Then we'll finish this next Saturday," insisted Fabe. "I got forty minutes of good shooting light coming to me."

Old Phil uncrossed his left leg from his right knee and let his boot heel hit the grass. "You got forty minutes of daylight left, *today*. Next Saturday is another day and another shooting match. Do you aim to fire any more strings today yet, or are you all through? Make up your mind."

"How can I fire with a gun with the nipple blowed out?" raged Fabe.

"Here's your winnings, Cal," said old Phil Tarney, boredly extracting the stakes from his shirt pocket and offering them.

Cal pushed Todd Reynolds forward. "Just hand me back my hundred, Phil," he said. "Give Fabe's money to the man who gave him a shooting lesson with his own gun."

Fabe Primble strode angrily to his car and drove away.

Cal walked back to his shooting bench, picked up the canvas cover and began slipping it down over Todd's gun.

But a blue veined hand reached over his shoulder and laid hold of Old Thunder.

"First let's look into some queer business," came Judge Lyle's easy drawl. He ran the ball of his thumb along the satin smooth barrel. "Hmm! Consign my moth-eaten ego to the superheated regions, Cal, if this job doesn't look like you need spectacles. Looks like you fitted my new barrel to the wrong gun, after all. Reckon you're getting old, Cal."

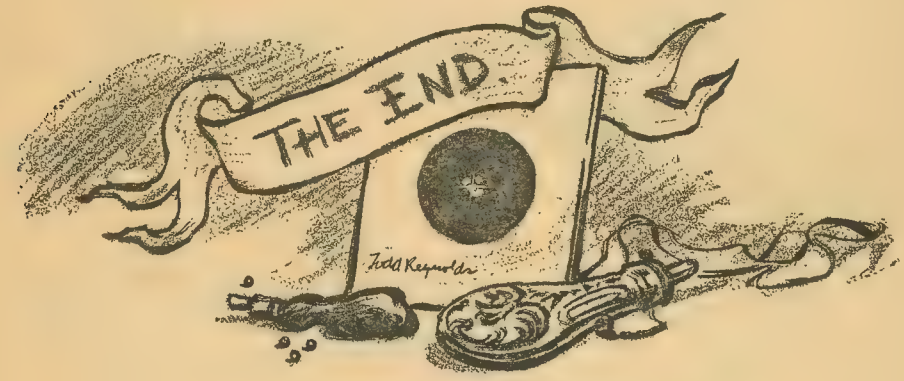
A smile crept out of Cal's heart and softened the firm lines of his mouth.

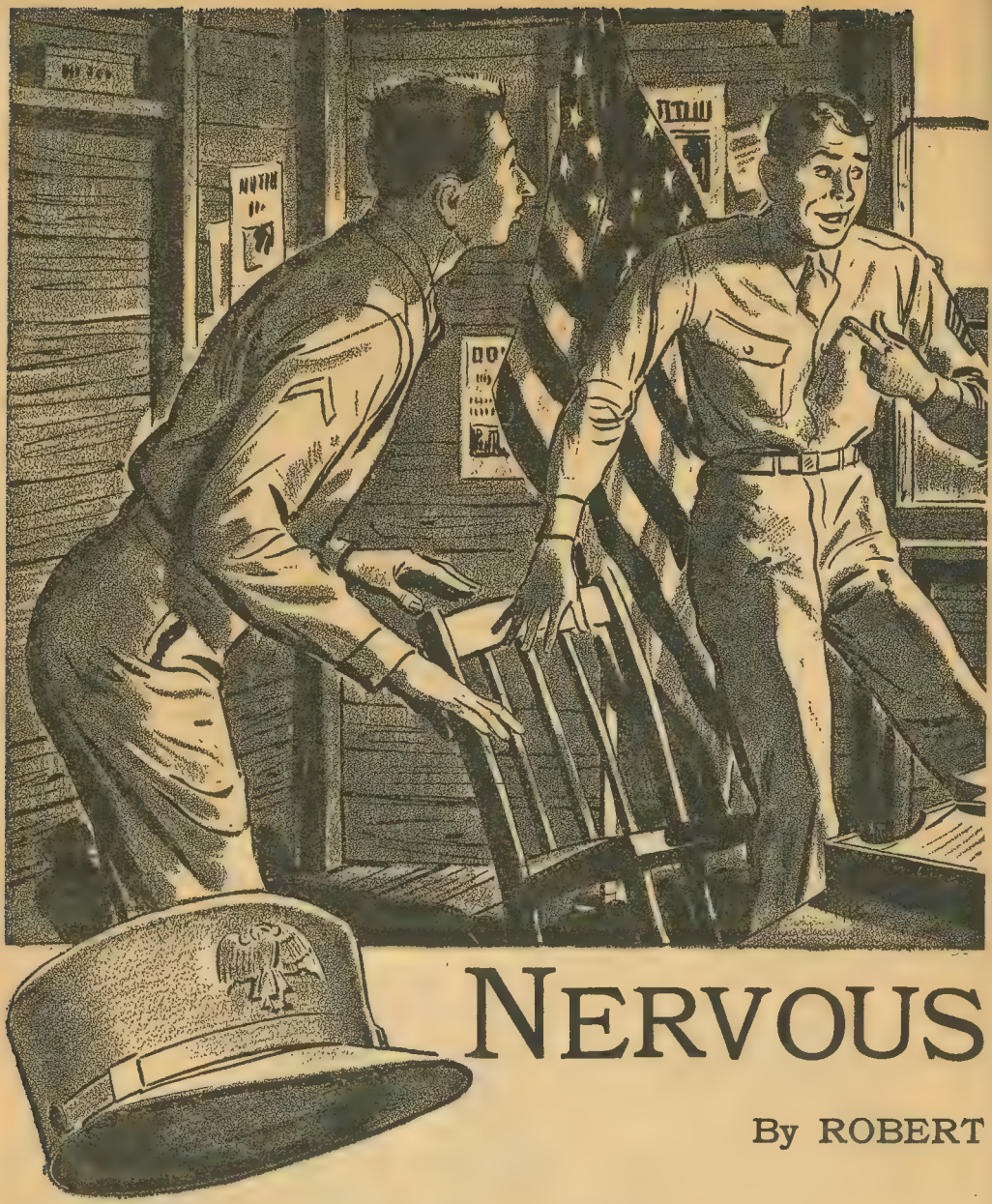
"Wouldn't surprise me, Judge, if Fabe didn't go stomping off calling me a lot worse than a half-price Judas."

The judge was leaning both elbows on the sturdy shooting bench and gazing at the circle of men gathered around Todd. They were passing his prize target board from hand to hand with an air of respectful homage. The glow of the sinking sun lighted a boy's proud face.

" 'How beautiful are the feet of him upon the mountain who brings good tidings!' " mused the judge. "Cal, this is the first time in weeks that boy has smiled. . . And if the Almighty has overlooked who's responsible, I'll straighten out the record before my sinful old bones get to bed tonight."

"When you do," said Cal, simply, "tell Him there's no need to bother about Fabe Primble. He's already been took care of."





NERVOUS

By ROBERT

STINKY and I are bathing our bare bodies in the knee-deep waters of Baga Creek, critically eyeing each other to see who is the yellower, when Stinky heaves a deep sigh for my benefit.

"Well," I say, "considering our long acquaintance and all that through thick and thin, I would say that there is something preying on your mind."

"I, in turn, would say that you have hazarded the right guess," Stinky replies, soaping his chest.

I soap my legs.

"In my position," Stinky finally continues, "I am privy to much information of a secret and restricted nature."

"In other words, as if those weren't words enough—"

"In other words, what I am thinking about couldn't be divulged or even pried out of me with a ten-foot pole."

"What a shame I've mislaid my thumbscrews. Besides, you are mixing your metaphors."

"You have hit the nail directly on the head,"

"Aftuh all, Ah'm suah that sahgeants don't answer telephones as long as theah's a li'l ol' T/4 or prahvate aroun'," Sergeant Ethel Smothers snaps.

IN THE SERVICE

H. WALL, Jr.

Stinky says, agreeing with nothing I have said that I can remember. "But because you are my true friend and I can trust you implicitly, I think I will convey at least an impression of the nature of my current dilemma."

"Which is?"

"Currently—my job."

"It gives me pleasure to know that you haven't become involved with a pen pal, being as how that's the only way you could become embroiled with a designing female in New Guinea," I cluck contentedly at him while I sit down to rinse off the soap. "That is a very great comfort to me."

Stinky drops his soap. "You amaze and startle me."

"Knowing your proclivities . . ."

"I mean that you sometimes practically read my mind."

"Sit down and soak," I suggest, "and tell me more." The conversation is taking a fascinating turn toward the most engrossing subject in the world—me.

"I'm reluctant to divulge more."

"Be reluctant, then. And what have you divulged, anyway?" I pretend indifference and stretch to let the water ripple through my GI haircut.

My pretense loosens the latch on his lips. "To this Eden comes a disturbing element. No more shall we be able to disport ourselves thus, effective as of any minute now."

"Maybe we better put on our pants and come back in," I suggest lightly.

"*No more naked bathing.*" Stinky underscores each word and fixes me with searching eyes. "Does the implication escape you?"

"Like a lead weight. We can't swim raw any more. Right?"

"Right. But over and above all that—there's more in what I say than meets the ear."

"I guess I've missed a beat somewhere."

"Better you should be in the same position as I to get advance data on coming events."

"Better I should answer your riddles and get a bid for guest appearance on Mr. Fadiman's clambake."

Stinky sighs. "I only wish I felt free to enlighten you further concerning this truly gruesome bit of information I picked up merely by keeping my ears open."

"And reading all the correspondence in the 'Secret' file."

Stinky shrinks away from me with an expression of outraged honor on his face. "So help me!"

"Not even the merest peek now and then?"

"Well . . . I'm human, after all."

"So you think. There are some people who've lived sheltered lives who wouldn't believe that," I tell him as I crawl out of our bathtub over the sharp rocks.

I'm lacing my shoes when Stinky breaks down at last and drops his plum of information. "The WACs are coming."

I look at him, then continue with the shoes. "Again?"

"This is for sure."

"The WACs, Cassandra, have been coming here ever since white men discovered New Guinea and left on the next boat like sensible people," I insist. "And don't try to tell me that classic illusion is incorrect."

"'Allusion!' An illusion is a figment of the imagination."

'Like the WACs coming here to New Guinea," I persist. "So it's 'illusion.' I am merely making a very clever play on words."

We walk down the path where the blue morning-glories are already turning pink and crumpling up.

"You will take me seriously," Stinky promises, sounding offended, "when it's too late and some muscular female walks into your office and sits down in your place."

"Stinky, you paint a very charming picture. Any female, muscular or otherwise, who tries to sit down in my place will find herself on my lap. I was a heller at musical chairs in my day."

"You will eat those words," he tells me as we part and go our separate ways.

NOW, nobody would ever classify me as a woman-hater. Having a wife and daughter might give me both motive and opportunity, but I'm what you might loosely call a very mellow fellow when it comes to my own family. As the man says, it's hard to hate anything as prevalent as women. Especially when they smell like flowers and look like the last dance you went to before the War Department shipped you to New Guinea to see if you'd get malaria or it would get you.

Should I tell you about how it was here at this base before we began to hear the clatter of tiny military heels on the duckboards and had to quit taking baths in the streams in what the Base Memorandum tastefully called, "the nude"?

There were about a baker's dozen Red Cross girls. They either made you think of your Aunt Clara or what your Aunt Clara would think about them if she could see them. In between these two extremes were a few who were simultaneously dream-girls for nearly three thousand GIs.

Then there were the nurses. Every Army nurse is at least a second lieutenant, it seems. And there's another Base Memorandum about them, too, as if that weren't enough. Army nurses are out-of-bounds to enlisted men. Besides, there aren't too many second lieutenants, male or female, who are apt to work their way into your dreams in that particular way. I like to think that makes me normal.

Well, after leaving Stinky and getting back to the company area, because Stinky is my closest friend and a very dinkum cobber, I waste no time in regaling the entire detachment with Stinky's latrine rumor about the WACs and we all have a very good time being comical about it. Robby pretends he's a WAC officer and we take turns saluting him. There is general hilarity.

Next day a special Base Memorandum is issued banning nude bathing at the base.

"That means 'naked,'" I explain to the boys. And I am beginning to wonder if Stinky has been guessing lucky.

Other people are, too. "It's for malaria control," Robby insists. "I got it straight from the medics."

"You're wrong." The master sergeant hands down a decision with a secret smile playing around the corners of his ample mouth. And that's playing, what I mean. "I happen to know the real reason for it."

"Malaria control?"

"The hell it is!" The smile stops playing.

"The hell it isn't!"

This goes on for several minutes, which is the normal length of the average argument in the detachment. It is very relaxing—unless you want to hear a program over the radio. Because the guy who ends on the loudest note wins the argument. And we have got some very fancy lungs in this outfit.

That morning, everybody in the detachment except Robby, the master sergeant, and me, is out on special details, screening in all the open latrines and closing the ones that are near the road. And that afternoon we have a session with the company officers on military courtesy, which is a subject that haunts the Army every now and then.

"Remember, men," the major concludes, "you are saluting the uniform, not what's in it." He clears his throat and looks embarrassed. "And for your information, commissioned officers of the Women's Army Corps are addressed as 'Ma'am.' Any questions?"

Robby gulps, "My God!"

The major gives us all a sympathetic look and dismisses us.

We are all speechless, which is quite a novelty, until I find my voice and make the comment that always covers all situations in the Army. "Well, this is it."

They all agree that, definitely, this is it.

"Only the beginning," Robby ad-libs, which nets him a groan and a dirty look from me.

I am thinking of letting Stinky write more book on the future and am counting on seeing him at the movies because it is one of the Information Films we have to see once a week, and attendance is compulsory. I find Stinky just before the regular evening newscast comes over the loudspeakers.

"The PX is getting in a stock of rat-tail combs, bobby-pins, and lipsticks—and everything," Stinky gabbles.

"I can't laugh that off, can I? If you've got a biscuit or two I'll eat those words now for you."

"They will be here next week." He lowers his voice to a penetrating whisper so he can be heard over the canned jive that's rattling the loudspeakers. "The advance guard has already landed up near the air-strip. They're taking over the old Air Corps area."

"What do you suppose they're going to do when they get here?" I ask, but the news comes on and we can't cope with that.

Afterwards, before the picture starts, Stinky admits, "I don't know what they're going to do. But I'm worried."

"Why," I ask, as if I didn't know.

But my question is fully answered during the next half hour because the Information Film we see is all about the WACs and what they

MUSCLES that till the good earth rely on SLOAN'S

The best-fed nation in the world is America. Sloan's salutes the farmer who ploughs the earth to provide our daily bread. His muscles strain that we may always have plenty. To the dignity of his labor, we pay respect.

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do. Everything that's considered a nice, clean, goldbrick job in the Army is done by WACs. And over and over again the man's smooth voice insists that the WACs are right in there to release a man for active duty overseas.

"You mean," I ask Stinky, "that there's another sea we've got to cross now that *They* are here? What's the matter with the Pacific? Isn't it wide enough for the War Department?"

"Not only that," Stinky says, "but it makes you feel funny having them come up here. It's getting civilized. And it rubs in the fact that we're only a bunch of pencil-pushers. That I don't care much for."

"Cheer up. Maybe we'll be moving out."

"That's not to be hoped for. We're stuck. I've taken another gander at the 'Secret' file. I am what in French they call *distraite*."

"That's feminine, isn't it?"

"The gender," he tells me haughtily, "suits the situation."

There's a school of thought that says nothing is ever as bad as you anticipate. The same school of thought spends its spare time digging up coffins in dark, neglected graveyards. Nobody could have anticipated what happened to us. So we didn't even have the satisfaction of complete anticipation.

WELL, *They* landed. In force. The few permanent party men who witnessed the event were impressed, in the order named, by the fact that the WACs kept their seams straight, wore their gas masks at alert position, and their steel helmets. They seemed very poised and did a lot of waving at random.

Even the major is having his troubles. I hear him tell the detachment commander, "I'm worn out from saluting. Everywhere I go I run into sweet young things who are highball hungry."

That impresses me because over here the salute has been reserved for such things as the pay-table and similar formal occasions.

A few days after the WACs have taken their beachhead and established same, I have to take a run up to the air-strip. So I pick up Stinky and we take off in the weapons'-carrier.

"What's new?" I ask.

"They are taking over the entire postal unit and the telephone system," he tells me in a voice loaded with disaster.

"Very suitable. Never liked those guys, anyway. Always hiding the mail. A little combat duty would do them good."

"Be more charitable," he cautions me. "There may be those who will gloat if and when you net the same bit of combat duty."

I decide to buy some reassurance. "You have nothing to worry about, old man. You are, of course, indispensable. Any fool can misdirect a letter or give a wrong number. Special Service is something else again."

Stinky agrees, with a sage nod of his head. "But clerks like you come a dime a dozen."

I am very dignified when I point out, "Not with the files set up the way I've got them. Dewey, himself, wouldn't recognize his own decimal system."

We ride along, each comforting himself with the notion that he is immune and favoring the other with pitying glances.

When we reach the air-strip parking area, Stinky walks up through the banana trees with me to see Good Old Ray, who's working in Air Liaison. He nudges and mutters out of the corner of his mouth, "Here comes one."

I expect to see a wallaby come hopping down the path, but I see that it's one of these WACs, and as we pass her I just plain let myself go and look back at her over my shoulder. She's a big lady. Not tall. Just big. And the uniform doesn't do much to conceal the facts.

We're about five paces past her and I'm turning to Stinky to compare notes when a voice behind us calls out, "Soldier!"

I turn slowly. "Him?" I indicate Stinky.

"No, you."

"Me?"

"Yes. What do you do when you meet an officer?"

"Do?"

"Yes. You *are* a soldier, aren't you?"

"Why, yes . . ."

"Well?"

Stinky stabs me in the back and hisses, "Give her a highball."

I snap to attention and pitch the captain—that's what she is, I can see now—a snappy salute which she returns.

"Watch it up, soldier. I won't turn you in"—I can see she's taking a few mental candid camera shots of my face—"this time."

I salute her again. She returns it. I walk up the path on rubber legs.

"Well," Stinky gaily observes, "you've seen your first WAC, haven't you?"

"Oh, brother," I sigh as we climb the steps to Ray's office.

And, "Oh, brother!" I gasp as I take a look at the swarm of three WACs buzzing around Ray's desk.

Good Old Ray smiles like most of his front teeth are missing. "'Lo, fellows. What's new?"

"Pahdon, Sahgeant." A little blonde reaches in front of Ray's nose and grasps the contents of his *Out* basket. "My! This is yestahday's memorander. You *were* behind!" And she sails off.

"From Boston," Ray whispers.

"Here's the roster for that Ballo Bay shipment." I hold out the sheets to him and a fat girl whisks them away from me and disappears with them.

"Terre Haute," Ray croaks. "I'm going nuts, candidly. They're everywhere. In my files. Typing. Telephoning. And they're all sergeants. Every last one of 'em."

"Tell me, Sahgeant"—it's the blonde from Boston again, wagging a letter under Ray's nose—"why this wasn't taken caih of. It's ovuh twenty-foah owahs old. And regulations definitely state—"

"I . . ." Ray is very unhappy, so Stinky and I creep out.

We don't have much to say to each other. I am concentrating on getting back to the weapons'-carrier before we flush another girdled officer.

After a while I reduce speed to the legal twenty-mile limit and suggest, "This is a situation."

Well, they landed in force—keeping their seams straight, all very alert and poised.

ILLUSTRATED By JOHN MEOLA

"Fraught with very ugly potentialities," Stinky adds.

"You can say that again."

"It is also a straw to show which way the wind is blowing."

"Dear boy, this is a typhoon."

NEXT morning the major is quietly biting his nails and I am concealing a week's filing in the "Miscellaneous" folder when a six-foot female private, first class, strides in, walks in cadence up to within the regulation two feet of the major's desk, snaps a salute that nearly shakes her pockets off and in a loud soprano announces, "Sir, Private, First Class, Mildred Mayo reporting for duty as per USA FFE letter dated 15 August, 1944."

The major can't think of anything to say except, "At ease."

Her feet in brown oxfords are lined up like a couple of Landing Craft, Personnel.

I return to my misfiling and try to hear what goes on. It seems the major is stalling for time and asks her to come back after noon chow.

Naturally he doesn't invite us all to have a huddle with him. He puts me to work looking up USAFFE letter dated 15 August, 1944, which we haven't got.

After noon chow we are all sitting around the radio, as we always do in the office before the brass come back from their noon bull session down at the officers' area, trying to think of something to say.

Robby suggests, "The only way to handle this

babe is to kid her. We all outrank her except Junior here." That's me, on account of I'm the oldest man in the world as far as they are concerned, being all of thirty-five. "And anyway he's a Pfc, too. So let's give her the business when she comes in."

There isn't any time for discussion. She walks into the office at exactly 1300 and looks at us like she smells something peculiar.

Robby springs to his feet. "Ten-HUT!"

We all scrape our chairs back and stand at attention.

Pfc. Mildred Mayo surveys us with nothing resembling dismay but with something almost like lightning in her eyes. "Be at ease," she directs, calmly. "Which one of you am I going to replace?"

Then the brass returns and gives us an excuse for breaking it up. Nobody is saying anything and everybody is feeling awkward and out-maneuvered.

To cap it all, Pfc. Mildred Mayo is given to me so I can acquaint her with the filing system. I feel like clinging to the major's knees and crying, "Not that!"

"We use the Dewey decimal system," I tell her. "This here is for Depot Memos and this here is for Base Memos, and—"

"Maybe we had better file this in the proper folder, then," she suggests, snatching a Base Memo out of the Depot Memo file.

It's like that all afternoon, and I'm a physical wreck by the time 1630 comes around and Pfc. Mildred Mayo takes off like a big-eared bird to crawl back into her little nest.

I'm not saying much to anyone. In this Army you either keep your cares to yourself or find a sympathetic ear you can depend upon. Mostly you do better to keep them to yourself. They get less circulation that way. But this is going to be a common woe, so I look up Stinky right after chow. I find him, sitting on his cot alone in his tent with his chin cupped in both hands.

"I have so much to tell you." I sink wearily into the cot directly across from him.

"I, too."

There's something about his attitude that convinces me that no matter what I tell him, he's going to top it, so I give him the lead. "Such as . . ."

Slowly, he raises his head. "I had the temerity to jump to the conclusion that I was through with all that. Then, suddenly, boom!" An expressive gesture with the hands.

"I don't get it."

"Just like that, boom!"

"Somebody shoot at you? It was bound to happen."

"Don't be obtuse." Stinky pats his left shirt pocket. "It happens to me here."

"All right," I say, impatiently. "You've built it up enough. Give it to me."

"I am in love."

"What with? The image of that fair maid from Newark who writes the pink letters?" I look around. "You've taken her picture down! And the personally autographed one of Ingrid Bergman, too."

"Yes. Good-by to all that."

"Who's the replacement? Lena Horne? Dinah Shore?"

"Sergeant Ethel Smothers."

"Who?"

"She's a wonderful blond girl with a widow's peak. A very good soldier, too."

"It sounds like a fascinating combination," I agree. But thinking of Pfc. Mildred Mayo, I add, "They're all good soldiers. But people don't go around falling in love with sergeants. They are our natural enemy." I look at him again. "You're kidding?"

But no. Stinky tells me all about this Sergeant Ethel Smothers who is working with him down at Special Service Theatrical Section. "She was in *Blossom Time*," he finishes.

"So was my Aunt Vera."

"You are your usual scornful self, I see, as far as the fair sex and the tender emotion is concerned."

This has gone far enough. "Tender emotion? I've got a WAC working for me whose tenderest emotion is the glint she gets in her eye when she wrings the necks of small, fluttering wild birds which she drags out of their nests just after they are hatched."

"You can't judge everyone in the WACs by one individual."

I've been here before. And I know that yelling at Stinky doesn't get you anywhere. "That's right. I'd like to case the sergeant."

"That can be arranged."

"And I'd like you to meet Pfc. Mildred Mayo."

"You will find that Sergeant Smothers is everything I've told you and more." He looks a little puzzled because I'm not screaming and stomping. "You don't approve of the idea, do you?"

"Approve, little man? That, as you know, is immaterial. The thing is that I never looked to see the day when anyone I knew fell in love with a sergeant. It's a strange Army. She outranks you, too." I glanced at his Technician, Fourth Grade, chevrons.

"That is strictly silly," he insists. "Ethel wouldn't pull rank. Why, I've never heard of such a ridiculous thing."

"You never know," I repeat. "Women in the Army is a new deal. But, being as how you're in the throes, you'd probably take any rank-pulling without a murmur."

Stinky draws himself up. "A man has his pride even when he is in love."

"Tell me only one thing, lover. Does Ethel share your passion?"

Stinky blushes. "I don't know—it's such a new thing . . ."

"Just budding."

"That's right. You know how it is? You're walking around and all of a sudden—"

"Boom."

"She's so very lovely and cuddly."

"Will you tell her about this budding thing?"

"That is something that time alone can tell."

"I see what you mean. I'll bring my parachute down tomorrow morning and take a look at your sergeant."

"I'll prepare her."

"I'd much rather see her just as she is, bub. All pristine and budding."

"I think that's a fine idea. I know she'll find you interesting."

That, I could have told him, would be the finishing touch. But I was beginning to have other plans. I wanted to be away somewhere quiet where I could chuckle and rub my hands together. Stinky follows me up the road a little way and I guess he's still puzzled over my lack of bitter speeches. After all, you don't talk to a fire. You put it out.

NEXT morning, Pfc. Mildred Mayo is, as usual, a good fifteen minutes early. The brass is even beginning to come early, too, trying to avoid having to slink past her accusing stare. She's right in there with a "Good morning, sir," for each, beginning with a regular tone poem for the major and ending with a polite murmur for the casual lieutenant who's on temporary duty with the outfit.

I spend a bad half hour with Mildred over filing copies of yesterday's correspondence. She fingers through the bound folder, going, "Dear me!" And she gives me looks that are calculated to scorch my earth. In a few minutes she has a handful of memos with which she stomps over to the major's desk in that nice way she has.

"Sir," she tells the major, "these were filed without your having initialed them."

"Oh . . . How do you suppose that happened?"

"Well," Mildred lowers her efficient, beady eyes and makes a picture of girlish reluctance. "Sir, I . . . We can set things right, sir."

I view her neat rear elevation and figure how I'd like to pummel it, her being only just a little too old to be my daughter. But I manage a smile as she triumphantly rejoins me.

"Thank you," I tell her. "I am sure the major is coming to appreciate your efficiency."

She gives me a quick, calculating look and almost smiles. I know I have the pattern. She's the sort of girl who likes being called efficient.

"That's awfully sporting of you," Mildred admits.

"I guess I can sure learn an awful lot from you," I ooze. "I've come to the conclusion that I shouldn't be jealous just because you happen to be a woman, but bow resignedly to Fate."

"You mustn't look upon me as a woman."

"All right, I won't. Let's work shoulder to shoulder. You can teach me."

"I tell you what I'll do," she burbles. "I'll make out a sort of training schedule. We can take up things in order and allot a certain amount of time to each. First we'll study filing procedure."

"That," I admit, "will be wonderful."

"I can't imagine where you got your training."

"Work on it a little more," I suggest. "The answer will come to you in time."

So we tear the files completely apart and Mildred directs the job in a voice that is loud enough to drive the major up to the kitchen for a cup of coffee at least half an hour before his usual time. I am fascinated. This is the latest thing in bucking. Mildred is on my aching back for fair and planning to travel as far as possible.

"Do you happen to know many other WACs in this base?" I ask her.

"Quite a few."

"Sergeant Virginia Vance?" Neither do I.

"No. I can't say that I do."

"How about Sergeant Ethel Smothers?"

"Oh, yes! Ethel and I are very great friends. We were in the same class at Des Moines."

"Nice girl?"

"Lovely. Very aggressive."

That's a brand new charm combination as far as I am concerned, but I don't tell her. "What's she like?"

"Oh, hair like honey, and the most beautiful Southern accent. She's from Virginia. And so clever."

"Must be." I'm winding up. "She's a sergeant already." I pitch it. "And I can see, knowing you, that the competition must have been intense."

"Rank doesn't come between us girls," Mildred tells me frostily. "We are above all that."

"Of course it don't."

"Doesn't."

"Doesn't what?"

"Of course it *doesn't*. I don't. You don't. He, she, or it doesn't."

"Stand-offish, aren't they?"

"I don't understand," she complains.

"Skip it, Private Mayo." The major is back behind his desk. "Like to take a ride."

"Don't be silly."

"Strictly business. You might as well get acquainted with the whole set-up."

"Oh, I *am* sorry."

"A common error. I am happily married and have at least six daughters who will all be WACs when they grow up."

"They could do worse," she observes tartly.

"Sure, but they have a nice, moral background and family life, so they won't. Shall we go?"

I tell the major where we are going.

"Good," he says, confidentially. "Don't be in any hurry. Take the rest of the morning. Take the afternoon, too. And tomorrow."

"Yes, *sir*!" I salute smartly, about-face and leave him staring after me.

"Well!" says Mildred, sitting bolt upright in the weapons'-carrier. "I must say that is the first soldierly thing I've ever seen you do."

"You and the major make two," I say, nearly snapping both our heads off with one of my famous kangaroo starts. I am expecting it. Pfc. Mildred Mayo is not.

She is picking bobby pins out of her lap and struggling to get her breath all the way down the road. She throws a mighty highball at a second lieutenant who returns it with amazement and only keeps from jumping in the creek because this is New Guinea and anything can happen.

We salute two captains and I highball a male Red Cross worker in my enthusiasm.

"One," Mildred explains gratuitously, "does not salute Red Cross people."

I stop outside Special Service with mixed emotions that keep revolving about assault and battery. "It always seemed to me that they ought to rate some sort of thing, like a pin or a ribbon."

"It's just not in the book," she states with authority.

"This is the Special Service office," I tell her, wondering what I did with that length of piano wire I brought over with me from the States.

"What are we going to do in there?" my golden goddess wants to know. "I don't see how Special Service concerns me in the least."

But we are inside and I am leading her up to Stinky's counter where he is engaged in selling something to a pocket-sized WAC sergeant whose hair looks like whipped cream tastes.

"Why," gasps Mildred, "it's Sergeant Smothers."

THE little kodachrome starts and turns. So does my boy, Stinky.

The sergeant doesn't act overcome with pleasure. "Hello theah." It's a mint julep voice, but there's almost too much frost on the container.

It looks to me like Auld Lang Syne is taking a beating. But Mildred is up to it and is going to make it girls together or die in the attempt. She mounts the barricades with, "So this is what you are doing?"

Both women look at Stinky, who is obviously the "this" referred to.

Stinky recovers his natural pallor and composure enough to present me to Sergeant Smothers. She bathes me with a limpid look that convinces me I've not lost my maleness.

"It's an experience," I inform her.

"Yo' hush," she cautions me, letting her eyes swivel slightly in her head. That brings Mildred back into range.

"Pfc. Mayo, here," I quickly say to Stinky, because this isn't the kind of war I'd planned, "has been telling me about what a clever young woman you have working with you."

"She's telling me," Stinky says, grinning.

Ethel glows at Stinky, shines at me, and practically sunburns Mildred. "She's too sweet to say that, Ah reckon. Honey, Ah've been fixin' to come see you but Ah don't know wheah time flies to. Ah sweah Ah don't."

"I understand." Mildred puts another shell in the breech, not meaning to be left at the post. "I've been frightfully busy. So many things to be done. . ."

"Say no moah. Ah've been that busy since coming heah to be with this li'l ol' T/4 that Ah've plain been lookin' foah a breakdown."

Mildred laughs excitedly. "I suppose you're up against much the same sort of thing here as I am up the hill." She's being subtle. And I love it.

Ethel gives her an eloquent look. "Mah deah!"

"I know," Mildred agrees. "Indeed I know."

"In just a minute or two," I tell Stinky in case he's missing something, "the girls are going to begin to spell."

Little blond star-eyes giggles. "Shame on y'all."

Mildred is not going to let sleeping dogs lie. "Yes. And I don't know how we have managed to do as well in this theater of war as we have, when I see the condition of the files up the hill. The major is going to have to give me absolute carte blanche to straighten things out without interference. And I'm sure that I won't meet with any opposition from him. He's really depending upon me. It's quite a responsibility. I don't know what the rating situation is up there, but—"

"Responsibility? Mah deah, Ah cain't begin to tell you the thangs we have to handle down heah. Perfectly prodigious. The whole blood stream of this li'l ol' base supply poahs through heah."

"Yesssss." The way Mildred says it, it has five or six "s's" in it. "You should see my files."

"Fahls!" Ethel gives a little shriek and staggers under the blow. "You speak of fahls? You nevah have seen fahls, mah deah. This li'l ol' T/4 heah jus' plain threw thangs into any ol' wheah. The cute thang."

The "li'l ol' T/4" was beginning to expose his molars in a cyanide grin.

"The files up the hill—"

"—an' this heah li'l ol' T/4, the cute thang—"

"—spent simply hours trying to make sense out of the whole mess."

"The cute thang doesn't have the faintest idea about Ahmy regulations. He thanks that 615-12—"

he telephone rings and is barely audible r the girlish din.

Sergeant Smothers," Stinky says. "Sergeant others!" he calls.

Yes?" she inquires, when his volume finally enetrates to her.

The telephone." Stinky glances at me with ick of his eyes. "It's ringing."

ergeant Smothers takes a quick look at Pfc. yo who is beginning to have an expression her face that starts with a tilted eyebrow. he telephone still rings.

Sergeant Smothers. The telephone is ring-g!" Stinky has iron in his tone now.

Well, then, hadn't yo' bettah answer it?" she aps. "Aftuh all, Ah'm suah that sahgeants n't answer telephones as long as theah's a l ol' T/4 or prahvate aroun'."

Stinky picks up the receiver.

"Well," I tell Mildred, "I guess we've done out all there is to do here. Now we can go ck up the hill and you can fix the files, too." give Sergeant Smothers the teeth as we go t of the door.

THAT night I go down to Stinky's tent, loaded for wild pig.

"Hello, honey," I greet him, ducking to get inside without sweeping my cap off. "How's every l thang?"

"Hmphumph." He motions me to sit down. e's got tacks in his mouth and is gesturing ith a hammer.

"I'd put Ingrid in the center," I suggest, sit-ing on his fruit-box foot-locker. "And kind f group the snapshots of the New Jersey lily round it."

He swishes tacks to the other side of his mouth and agrees with a motion of his head.

"Heard any grapevine lately?" I say.

"Mmph." In spite of the tacks I take it that is a negative.

"Well, I hardly know how to begin and I am reluctant to tell you what I do know. Especially since you have formed this attachment, and all."

Stinky spits out tacks and hammers the last snapshot up extra hard. "I sense that you have information of a confidential character."

"You ain't just beating your gums, lover."

"Can it be divulged?"

"Mere word of mouth. I hate to start rumors. Picked up by my long, long ears which have grown very sensitive to the major's telephone conversations."

"Does it affect both of us?"

"And others."

"I'm all agog."

"We are shipping north to open a new base."

"No kidding."

"That's right. And I hate to tell you this —we're leaving the gentle ladies of the WAC to take over this base without interference."

"Tell me more," Stinky croons, placing hands on my shoulders.

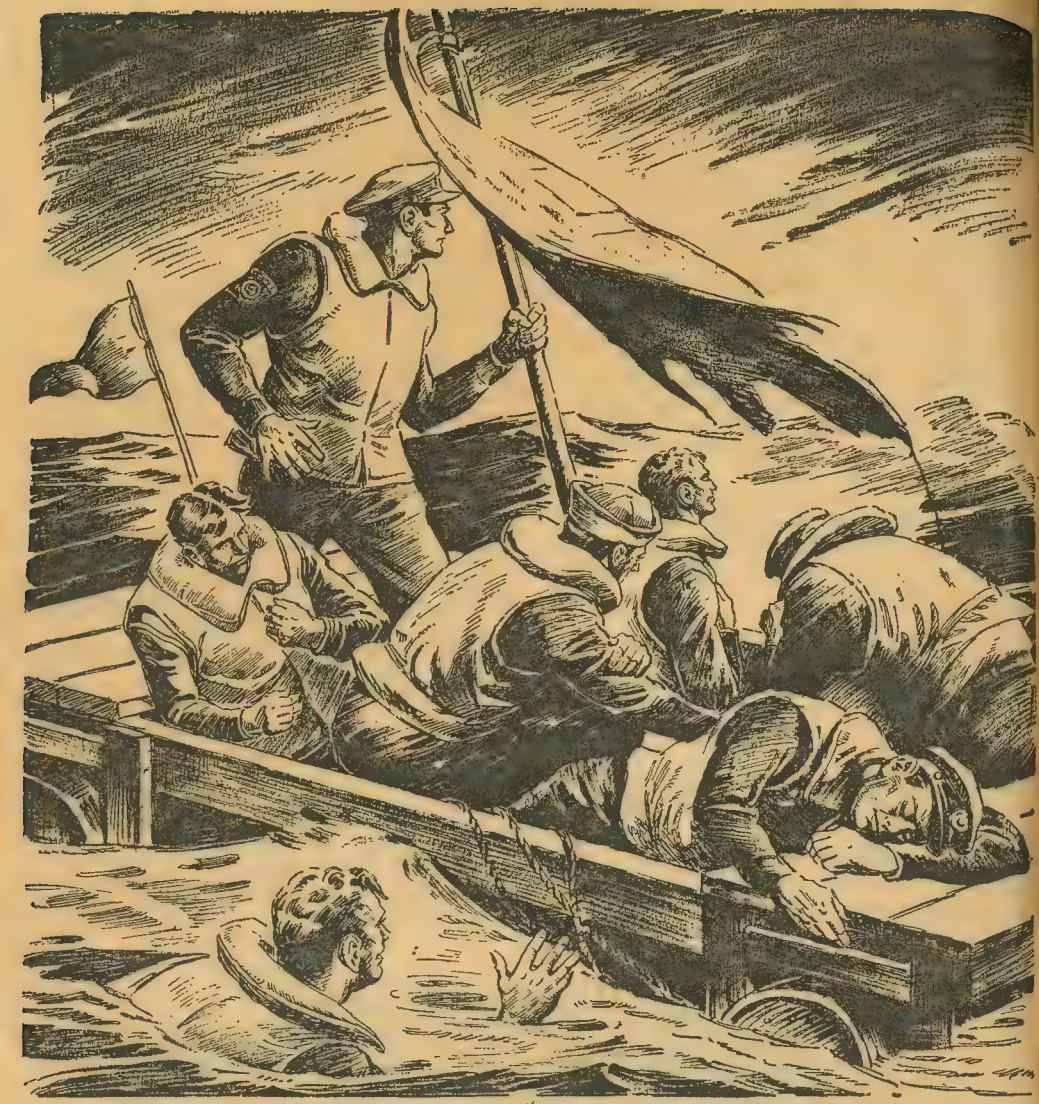
"And I want you to know I share your grief."

"If there's any moisture on my face, it's drool," he grins, massaging my shoulders.

"Stinky," I say, "if you had a sword and I had a sword, and if there were a couple more like us, we'd raise our swords together and join them in midair. Just like those admirable characters in De Maupassant."

Being Stinky he has to say, "Dumas!"

Well, let it go at that.



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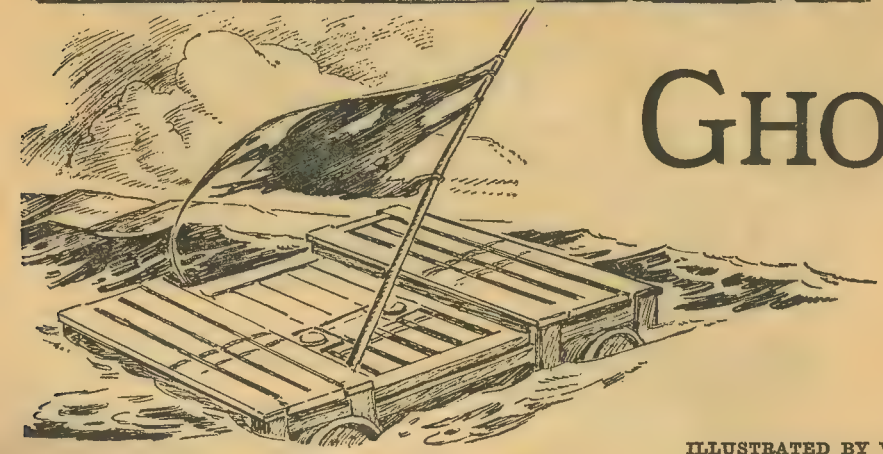


ILLUSTRATED BY V. E. PYLES

V. E. Pyles

The other two messmen got the full blast of a machine gun. One fell backward against the yellow distress flag; the other against a locker, a hole in his chest.

CREW

By KENNETH PERKINS

THE yearning for life sustained the younger ones—the junior engineer, an oiler, a wiper, some boys from the steward's department. The older ones wanted to live, too, but they were tired of fighting sunstroke and salt. They lay inert in the life raft's central well or on the open-slat decking. They did not talk or think, but it was possible that they dreamed, as Jim Buckley, the engineer, dreamed, of land and green grass.

They should have been dead long ago, the whole red-eyed crew, Jim thought. It was only because the sea is a cat forever playing with a mouse that they had been granted twenty days more of life. Or was it twenty-one days since the *Kilpatric* burned and sank? The quartermaster said it was forty days, the same span of time as the Flood. He even quoted scripture. *"Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail and the mountains were covered."*

But the quartermaster's measure of time and tide and drift and wind had been confused before he died.

Jim Buckley was confused in the head, too, but he could still add. And all of them were sane enough to know that the land they saw far ahead like a long, low smirch of cloud was grazing land. They knew a little about the Argentine, for the *Kilpatric* had been carrying oil from the La Plata refineries. The Brazil current had brought them down here, according to the quartermaster. He feared that this Brazil current would bring them into the still greater West Wind Drift, and proved it by the rayon chart—the only thing on board impervious to fading and salt water. But that was before he became convinced that he was one of the sons of Noah.

With their jury rig, a spritsail patched together with shirts and wire, they could make no headway against these main currents. The West Wind Drift, according to the quartermaster, would take them back again into the middle of the Atlantic. "You don't even have to add to understand that." No, but you had to understand that the West Wind Drift takes you East. And the younger men of the crew, still clinging through sheer willpower to the hope of smelling grass again, refused to believe the quartermaster's dire warning.

"It's land I tell you. It's land!" Porky Johnson, the pantryman, shrieked when he saw a cloud on the western horizon. This was several days before they really sighted the low littoral, but in Porky's once fat chest hope sprang eternal.

The quartermaster shook his head. He was the only man from the deck department so the stewards and the engineers listened. "Any landfall in these waters," he swore, "would be Africa, because that's where the Cape Horn current would fetch you. But it wouldn't bring you to Africa itself. Oh, no! It would fetch you up to the South Equatorial current and that would haul you West again so you'd be going in a circle in the Atlantic for ever and ever."

"Perhaps that's what we're doing," Jim Buckley thought. "Perhaps we're just going around in circles. Perhaps this *is* eternity. Perhaps Red Divens and Porky and Drip Nyborg and those Panameño messmen huddled in the well, perhaps we're all sailing along in eternity right now! Maybe we died when the *Kilpatric* burned and we knocked loose the pelican hook and launched this raft on the skids."

BUT they were not talking like dead men. They were talking about earth, about land, about living. And when, some days later, they actually did sight land, they yelled as they talked. They were hilarious, their salt-burned faces radiant. Now they chattered in a frenzy, not about currents and drifts and sailing in eternity, but about earthly things. They laughed and talked of food, of Spanish burgundy, of corn tamales, of beef chucks on a pampa hacienda, because they knew they were going to land on the Argentine coast.

This they were sure of from the last five nights of reckoning from Orion, which is a summer constellation down there. And they knew it by the Southern Cross. Even the pantryman, having listened to the quartermaster's last words, knew something of these stars and could compute the latitude more accurately than the crazed quartermaster himself.

"When I get there," Porky, the pantryman, said jubilantly, "I'll go so far inland I'll never see salt water again. I'll buy me a herd of cows and a pedigreed bull. That's how you get rich in the pampa. You get the same chance as the pioneers had in our Wild West of the old days. It even looks the same. Prairies and no sea breeze. Just land and grass!"

"Where I'm going is the Patagonia sheep country," said Red Divens. Red had been a wiper on board ship, but before that, it was rumored, he had been a hired gunman for a sheep outfit in the States. It was his record—a commuted life sentence—that had kept him out of the Army even though he was a champion marksman. "Patagonia, that's along the coast yonder, maybe right where we're looking. My dad ran sheep in Montana. It's just like that. Only you can get rich and have all the horses you want. There's so many horses they even used horse grease in the street lamps in Buenos Aires."

Jim Buckley caught the contagion of this wild talk. He laughed and gabbled although his tongue was swollen. "I'm going up further north into the Chaco timber belt. My dad was in lumber in Oregon. I want a country like Oregon. But after we rub out Japan, and the war's over, South America is the place to start a lumber business. Maybe exporting hardwood."

"But the war isn't over yet," Drip, the oiler, groaned. "There's still got to be a Merchant Marine. We've licked Germany—maybe. That's what we thought after the last war."

This might have quelled the average man's spirits but not those of the younger ones in the life raft. "The hell with war!" Montana Red shouted. "We're talking of peace. The hell with the sea!" This brought cheers and whoops. But young as they were, they looked and acted like old soaks falsely rejuvenated by liquor.

Down in the four-by-five well of the raft the group of spigotres from the Canal Zone joined this phenomenal drunken orgy, a drunkenness of thirst-tortured men. They had been to Buenos Aires and La Plata, these messmen, and, knowing the language, they knew their way around. One would buy a house down on the Riachuelo where the tango was born, and

he would dance all day with the dry ground under his feet! Another would walk on the blessed ground of the Plaza San Martín where the nursemaids and lovers meet, and he would pick out a different nursemaid every day—after going to a little mass in the morning.

"When I get to Buenos Aires I will go first to the races at San Isidro. If I can cheat the sea with my luck, what will I not do at the San Isidro track!"

"You're all nuts!" Drip Nyborg, the oiler, sneered. "You got to have money."

"Money!" Jim Buckley scoffed. What a preposterous word to mention when he and his mates had just been promised life and the whole world! Money was something fraudulent, an artifice made up by tricksters. Life and youth and dreams—and grass under his feet—that was all Jim needed. It was all there, right on the horizon, and this sniveling oiler was talking of money!

Now Jim smelled something in the wind, something besides salt. It was a green, fresh smell. He stood up on the slat decking, a scrawny, burned, whiskered scarecrow, lifting his arms. The world would be his, if he could only feel land under his feet! To him and his mates, land was Mother Earth.

Most of his mates, like Jim himself, had been to sea only a year or two. None of them was a born seaman. It was the war that had thrown these landsmen together. They had gone through the same mill at one Maritime training station or another. They had learned something called "general seamanship"—knot tying, nautical terms, gunnery, lifeboat and fire equipment. Porky Johnson, the pantryman, had shipped out from Sheepshead Bay, Montana Red from Gallup Island, Drip Nyborg from Hoffman's Island, New York, and Jim Buckley from Avalon. They had all thought they loved the sea but the sea had changed their minds.

Montana Red whooped, "What're you waving at, Jim?"

"At the trees yonder!"

"If it's the pampa there ain't any trees," Drip said. "It's only windmills."

"But I smell 'em. Trees with fruit growing!" Jim sang out. "That's what I'll eat—fruit or maybe pumpkins. Anyway it'll be something that grows out of the ground!" He pointed to the cloud-like contour which was a little higher, a little sharper now. He could see the gleam of white every few moments when they rode a crest and glimpsed the distant combers. Now he could hear the birds. For the last two or three days, he had seen the birds and knew that they were flying landward because it was near sunset. "It it is not sunset," the quartermaster had explained, "the direction of flight means nothing." The quartermaster, before his obsession about Africa and Noah and the eternal circle, could even tell how far from land they were, by watching the different birds. But Jim could not tell just which ones flew far out to sea and which had sense enough to stay near land. All he knew was that now there were a lot of them, shrieking and clanging with joy at the warm land breeze.

"The breeze smells like Montana in summer," Red, the gunman, said wistfully. And this got them all dreaming their dreams again.

"Summer! A good dry summer!" Porky laughed. "And a bar with the hard-packed earth for a floor, the kind those cantinas have over yonder."

"And in the cantina we'll have guitars playing for us," Jim sang, his ears humming with the blow of the wind. Guitars playing fandangos—angelic music compared to the wail and wash and howl of those twenty days!

"And there'll be girls in the cantina sashaying up to us and throwing their arms around us!" Porky added. "And every one will be cheering and throwing flowers at us!"

"Flowers! That's what we want. Anything that grows with sap and not with salt!"

"Maybe the rest of the crew will be there," Buckley said.

THIS was sheer nonsense. The rest of the crew had gotten away in lifeboats with radios intact. There was little doubt that they had been picked up by Catalinas perhaps two weeks ago, after the lifting of the fog that had separated Jim Buckley and his mates from the rest of the *Kilpatric's* crew.

A long reach with their patched-up sprit-sail brought them into the first ground swells. Jim took the sweep from the pantryman who had been keeping the raft on something approaching a course. At least he had been able to keep the sail filled. Unable to turn shoreward without heaving to, Jim quartered toward the first comber.

"Don't sail into that!" Drip yelled. "You want to drown us, you damned landsman!"

"Sure I'm a landsman and proud of it!" Jim guffawed. "I'm heading for land, but wait till I get some steerageway again." His heartbeat counted the dragging seconds before the sail filled. Then as he got steerageway and turned head on into the next comber, the sail luffed.

"I tell you you'll capsize us!" Drip screamed. "We'll get rolled! Those combers will roll us and kill us! Look at the size of 'em!"

"Let 'em roll us!" Jim laughed. "So long as we roll ashore!"

Just ahead of them the surf reared green, then curled and clapped in a thunder of white.

"If we roll we'll swallow a lot of sand, and won't I love it!" Jim yelled. "I'll love the very taste of sand!"

"But it isn't a beach, it's rocks!" Drip Nyborg whimpered.

The spigotty messmen clutched at the deck

slatting, all three of them of course on the landward side. And this did not help. Jim thought better of it, let her pay off and fill. "Those rocks," he admitted, "don't look so good."

"Why not? What's the matter with rocks? I want to feel 'em!" Montana Red shouted. "A mother rubbing my forehead to make me sleep —that's what rocks will feel like. A mother's hands, rock or sand, so long as it isn't salt water!"

"If it's Indios, maybe they're coming for something else!" Drip wailed.

"They're not Indios, they're white men!" Jim Buckley shouted and his mates joined in hilarious cheers.

Yes, they were white men, it was easy to see as the boat stood closer. It was a very small boat which showed only the shoulders and heads of the men above the swells. As they paddled closer, Jim could see their clean-shaven faces. The fat of their round cheeks made them look like women compared to the bearded skeletons in the life raft.

The surf lifted him, tossed him, then he felt the soul-satisfying solidity of rocks.

Jim was about to try again, quartering up on the long, glassy swell behind the comber, when he saw a boat that had appeared magically a few cable lengths away. The boat itself was scarcely visible above the swells but Jim saw the three men waving, hallooing. They must have stood off from shore at some distance down the coast for they were actually further out to sea than the life raft.

Those on the raft who had strength enough stood up and waved and yelled. "They're coming to help us through the surf!" Buckley cried.

Buckley was standing up, but from dizziness and also a queer qualm in the pit of his stomach he sprawled, flopped sideways into the lap of the pantryman. He sat there a moment gasping, trying to explain why he was not waving his arms and laughing any more.

"It's a rubber boat. It's from a sub."

"What do you mean a sub? They might be from a plane."

"But I saw the periscope not a long way behind them."

As the rubber boat bobbed up over the nearest swell, the three faces appeared suddenly clear and close above the cork ring. Jim Buckley saw the blue eyes, pale and protuberant, the slack, sullen, German mouths.

And he saw the queer grins as the eyes narrowed and the paddling stopped.

CHAPTER II

ARGENTINE RECEPTION COMMITTEE

THAT dizzy moment, Jim Buckley was convinced, was his last moment of life. His thoughts were a kaleidoscope of glaring visions—of the *Kilpatric's* flaming stern swinging upward in the foggy sky, her prow plunging, swallowed by a sea that was lurid with fire. He had the vision of men swimming, yelling in the burning oil, of Porky and Montana Red and Drip Nyborg and the brown-faced Panameños climbing like dying rats into the raft and its stove-up lockers. He even saw the faces as they had been before the twenty days: Porky was fat then, Montana Red for all his lurid past was only a kid with a downy fuzz of a beard that changed him in a week from a youth to a man, in another week from a man to an old dotard. Drip Nyborg, bright eyed, wizened, jumpy as a schoolboy, was now shriveled and burned to a salted mummy.

That last hour of hilarity, Jim realized, was like the fragrance of flowers, sweetest just before they die. The yipping was like the mythical singing of a swan. But now the song had changed. One of the messmen in the raft's well was kneeling, praying to his saints. He also prayed to God when a shot from the Germans in their rubber boat bored his chest.

The other two messmen got the full blast of a machine gun. One fell backward against the yellow distress flag, the other against the locker between the two slat decks, holes in his forehead, his temple, his neck, his chest.

As the machine gun chattered on, riveting its song, Porky's side turned bloody and he rolled by the board with a comical splash. Red, the wiper, jerked as if from the impact of the slug that cut his cheek. But Red's brain was still working. He jerked forward again, diving over the decking and metal barrels for the protection of a big green wave. Montana Red had cheated death more than any other castaway on this doomed life raft. He had been in many a gunfight in his short life, but the cowherders who stole water from his father's sheep had fought like men, not like Nazis. Red's last words just as he went by the board were a gasped prayer. "God, if You'll only put a gun in my hand!"

Someone else was praying in loud screams. Drip Nyborg, the oiler, kneeled, holding his arms high, shrieking in a strange gibberish that might have been a sort of pidgin German. He was the only one who called out, obviously bawling for mercy. That detail was very clear to Jim Buckley, who flopped in a belly dive. And it was the last detail he remembered.

A slug must have barked him, cutting through his cap, for Jim did not even know when he hit the water.

"That was how I got mine," he mumbled to himself, spitting green ooze. He was floating because of his lifebelt, swinging easily in a world of kelp, of water, of sunlight warming his wet face. He seemed to float in air, sailing, flying as if he had passed from one life to another—a transmigration from horror to peace.

He was still thinking or dreaming of those young kids—his fellow castaways. They had lived their short score of years and should have had fifty years more to live—if they had had their apportioned span of life. They had cheated the sea when all they had to cheat with was "general seamanship"—knot tying, nautical terms, gunnery.

"No, that's not it. They had cheated the sea because they were kids who wanted to live. They went on living—regardless!" And then he saw them all shot.

He had seen some of them go overboard, but he had not seen them come up. He was only certain of their disappearance into that deep green swell and the floating tangle of kelp. There was no other certainty. They might be dead. Jim Buckley himself might be dead. This buoyant drifting in a world of green was like that circle the quartermaster had talked about. It was like something beyond life.

But it did not last long. The surf lifted him, tossed him, rolled him, sanded him, and then he felt the soul-satisfying solidity of rocks.

The pain in his head and bruised shoulder and battered knees was very remote, as if in another body. He lay there swathed comfortably in kelp, dozing, staring upward at the red sky, then up and down the rockbound shore. There was no sign of Porky or Red or the gibbering and weeping Drip Nyborg, or the brown-faced messmen; no sign of the life raft nor of the Germans in their rubber boat; nor of the periscope of the sub. He was so lightheaded that he had the feeling there had been no sub at all, no rubber boat, no Germans slaughtering the half-dead castaways. He became more and more convinced that it was all a dream from which he was gradually awakening.

He squirmed to drier rocks and found himself once more on his back staring at the sky, which was still red. That was peculiar. He had the impression that he had crawled around the rocks for hours without any conscious plan. His body, which he had freed from the lifebelt, felt light and queer; it was ruled not by his brains but by his stomach. He was eating little fiddler crabs and the juice was like a medicinal drink. It soothed his stomach and his nerves and gave him strength enough to crawl on his knees to where grass began.

The red in the sky gave way to a blazing gem-like blue. His swollen eyeballs jerked as they tried to focus on that sun and find out why it would not set. "My brains are still working, anyway. I can figure it out. It's not sunset. It's sunrise."

But his brains were not working smoothly. Hunger had drained the blood from his head, and the rocks had bashed his skull, as had that slug from the machine gun which barked his crown. He was like a man walking in his sleep. He did not know how far he walked or how he happened to be standing sucking maté from a gourd through a long tube which someone had stuck in his hand. While the liquid refreshed him and his eyes cleared, he looked across the gourd at an Indian and a burro.

IT was a very logical trend of events, come to think of it, even though there was no crowd around him as he had expected. He had imagined a more glamorous reception with girls in the crowd throwing flowers at him. But this would come later. There had not been enough time since he had crawled up out of that tangle of kelp. That is, very little time had elapsed so far as he knew. Perhaps he had slept for a day or two, perhaps he had wandered inland for quite a distance, by reflex action walking in the opposite direction to the sea. He had fled the sea, hounded in his dreams by the horror of it. He could not tell just how much of it was dreaming, but right now he was certain of this Indio and the burro.

The Indio was holding out his hand and snapping his fingers. It was a long time before Jim Buckley understood that the man wanted some money before he would give him food!

Jim spread his legs out to steady himself, put his hands on his lean hips and burst into a laugh. Drip Nyborg, the oiler, had been right. After twenty days of tossing in a life raft, land would be heaven—if you had money.

"You're pretty dumb, *hombre*. But maybe you haven't heard what happened down there in the surf. A pigboat came along and some Germans shot up my pards who were dying and helpless. You understand? Shipwrecked and almost saved and then shot up, get it? What's the matter with you?"

The Indio kept shaking his head, muttering in a mixture of Spanish and his own vernacular, which might have been Tehuelche. Buckley understood two words easily: *"No sabe."*

"All right, here! No *dinero!*" Buckley turned his pockets inside out, his laugh dropping to a grunt of disgust. But the Indio pointed to a knife which one of the pockets had partly disgorged.

"Not *this* knife!" Buckley shook his head. "I may have use for it. I'd like to use it on you." He pointed to the pannier of fruit and tamales on the burro's flank, but the Indio stood in the way and pointed to Buckley's wrist watch. The watch had a broken crystal, the face and the buckle of the strap had turned a rusty brown. It was beyond repair after that stewing in salt water and Buckley had thought of discarding it long ago when the strap dug into his swollen flesh. Now he was glad enough to get rid of it.

The Indio reached in his pannier for what seemed to be the smallest cantaloup, tossed it into the trembling, outstretched hands. This would be the first course of a good meal, Jim thought, but the Indio seemed to have decided that it was all the rusty old watch was worth, for he kicked his burro to the road and both started running.

Buckley stared aghast. He wanted that food. He had come a long way on a life raft to get it. He started staggering after the Indio, then, in an insensate rage, picked up a stone and hurled it.

The first stone missed because of the half-blind aim, but the second was a lucky shot. It caught the back of the Indio's head a good thwack against the black, horse-mane hair. The man whirled as if to charge, whirled again and ran.

Because of the exertion of throwing the rocks, Buckley sank to his knees. But he had strength enough to lift the cantaloup and pound it on the ground. It was just as well perhaps that he could not gorge himself. These chunks of ambrosia were just enough for a starving man and not too much. He felt better—until he saw three men coming toward him.

They came from an enormous hide-topped cart which had drawn up by the side of the road. That Indio apparently had come back to complete the unfinished bargain, with the help of two compatriots.

One of these was a stocky old man, the driver of the ox wagon; the other was a picturesque giant in flat black hat, baggy pants and broad belt—a type of that fast-vanishing breed, the gaucho. A three-pronged whip with metal weights spun in the gaucho's hand as he came. Buckley had heard natives on the La Plata waterfront talk of the "three Marias" which could wrap themselves around the feet of a wild horse and also, if necessary, around the neck of a man. As it spun, making a small whirring circle, Buckley stared fascinated. Quite a reception committee for a ship-wrecked sailor, he thought grimly.

He was thinking especially of the food and flowers and wine and girls he had talked about with his pards when they had all become drunk at the first sight of land.

THE ground under his feet tipped like a deck in a storm as Buckley got up. His head was spinning. That was the reason he could not think wisely. He thought he could fight off these men with only a knife.

As he squared off, the whip wrapped its lead weights around his legs and dumped him like a calf roped for the branding.

The gaucho looked down almost sympatheti-

The gaucho's "three Marias" wrapped its lead weights around him and dumped him like a calf roped for the branding.

cally. He was a chunky-muscled, leather-faced man with the coal black eyes of a Portuguese Indian. His voice, however, was not so barbarous as his looks. It was not only musical and soft, but the speech was English.

"So! *Hombre,* what is this that has come about?"

"You can speak my language!" Buckley gasped in relief. "Then you'll understand!" He talked fast, for the Indio had stooped down and frisked him of his knife. "Some Germans shot up my pards! When I got ashore I was crazy from what I'd seen. And being starved made me crazier still. I had to have food. That's why I threw that rock!"

The gaucho thought this over, then turned and spoke to the Indio in his own tongue. The latter, after feeling the bump on his skull, nodded, scowling, muttering.

The gaucho translated. "This Indio admits you were about to faint when he first saw you, so he gave you some maté. But then you stoned him, so he called us, thinking you were a desperado."

"I was crazy with hunger, I tell you!" Buckley cried. "Twenty days at sea on a raft—doesn't that mean anything to you? We drifted all that time and almost got ashore when the Germans shot us up."

"Twenty days, so!" the gaucho said. "A raft, h'm!" He turned again to his companions, palavered with them. They seemed impressed, staring at the lank, bony man on the ground. The old wagon driver knelt down and unsnagged the three Marias. The gaucho put his hands under Jim's armpits and lifted him as easily as if he were a scarecrow weighing no more than a suit of clothes on a stick.

"You say there were others on the raft with you? But where are they?"

"The Germans killed them, except the three of us who jumped. Two of my pards might

He was a picturesque giant —a type of that fast-vanishing breed, the gaucho.

have gotten to the beach, so we've got to search for them!"

"It does not appear that you have strength to search for anything but food. I will go down to the beach myself and see if this strange report is true."

"You mean you don't believe me!" Buckley gasped.

"It is easy to believe that you are a castaway, *hombre,* one who is, as you say, crazed with hunger. We are not brutal men in this country. On the contrary, we will give you food and a place to rest, *si,* even something to wear besides these rags. Serve yourself to get in the wagon. This old *mozo* says he is sorry for you and he offers to take you to his hut."

In slap-happy resignation, Buckley let them lead him to the wagon. He was dazed at this abrupt change in his fortunes, but when they lifted him up to the musty bales of wool he wondered just which way his fortunes had turned. That Indio with the bandaged head had jumped in and was sitting at the open end of the wagon grimly rubbing his knife.

"So, *adiós, 'ñor!*" the gaucho said. "Dine well and drink deep and go with God!"

"Wait a minute. This bird has my knife and I'd like to get it back."

"I am sorry, *'ñor,*" the gaucho said. "But he still doubts this strange report of yours about the Germans and the raft and the shooting. I have told him that I am going down to the beach to find proof that you are not making dupe of us. Without doubt I will find something which the tide must have brought in. If I do not find proof, then"—he nodded to the Indio—"he will be very angry at you. And so will I."

Buckley was satisfied. His story was strange enough but the same tide that had brought him in must have brought in some of the flotsam of that massacre. There would be bodies. And in two of the bodies—Porky's and Red's—there might be life!

As he sank back in the musty nest of wool, the hide top screened the sides of the road from view. As for the open back of the wagon, Buckley could see nothing but the Indio with the bandaged head. In fact he did not try to see anything else. He kept his eye on the Indio's hand at all times, the hand which held the knife.

But this resulted in something like self-hypnosis. He was exhausted to begin with and the dry squeak of the wagon wheels lulled him. He gave a start, awakened as if from a deep sleep by the toll of a church bell. He felt refreshed and strangely exuberant. He thrilled to the honk of an auto horn, then to the call of a street vendor. They had reached a town.

When the wagon stopped he wanted to sing. He would sing of food and wine and warmth and rest and he would sing of land! The Indio, he noticed with relief, had slipped down from his post as guard and was talking to someone in a khaki jacket and shoulder holster. The latter, after some palaver, poked his head into the wagon. "If it conforms, *hombre,* get out."

Buckley scrambled over the wool heaps, slid to the ground and blinked at the glare of adobe walls and iron roofs. The word *Policía* over a door gave him a good idea where he was. The town jail was on a sleepy street that led down to the dry wash of a river. He could see a grain-loading chute down there with the masts of ships showing at the street's end. In a cantina on the waterfront, a phonograph ground out an Argentine samba. Dogs awoke and barked at the bareheaded, unshaven tramp. But before a crowd could gather, Buckley was standing in the jail office facing an affable *sargento* of police.

THE Indio with the bruised head started to jabber his complaint but Buckley jabbered at the same time. "Some Germans in a sub—they caught us in the surf and shot us—"

The *sargento* put up his hand. "Please, *hombre,* one at a time. Serve yourself to wait." He listened to the Indio first, inspected the blood-smeared bandana and the welt on his head. The complaint was given in Tehuelche but the *sargento* obligingly translated.

"He says you were near the Bahia Blanca

road. You came from Bahia Blanca I suppose?"

"I came from the Atlantic Ocean. What the hell are you talking about?"

"Then you were never near Bahia Blanca?"

"I never heard of it, I don't know where it is, and I don't know where I am either."

"You are in the port of Chical-có. Bahia Blanca is up that way, north," he waved to a wall of the prison office. "Carmen de Patagones is down that way. Now which way were you last?"

"I told you I was at sea, in the Brazil current, in a life raft, damn it! And some Nazis—"

"This matter of the Nazis," the *sargento* said, smiling, "hardly fits with the rest of your story which is good enough as stories go. I suppose you have picked out the name of a ship that was really wrecked?"

"I don't know what you're driving at, but the ship was the *Kilpatric,* carrying oil from La Plata."

The *sargento's* smiles turned to chuckles. The sentry in khaki and blue jeans had been listening with his tongue in his cheek, but now he burst out in a hoot of laughter.

"Por Dios! Quite a coincidence!" the *sargento* commented with a wag of his head. "Let us see what you have as identification to show that you were on that particular ship. . . What, nothing?" he said after the sentry had searched. "Nothing but sea weed. Tsk! tsk! You are a sad spectacle. How long since you have eaten a good meal?"

"The last week we had a gull and what pemmican and malted milk there was left. I got some crabs on the beach. I went off the handle when this fellow only gave me a cantaloup for my watch. That's why I pelted him."

The *sargento* nodded feelingly. "An extenuation, *si.* In fact I notice that you are shaking at the lips. A good hot dish of *olla podrida* will fix that." He called to the sentry, who went off obviously for the *olla podrida,* but also quite obviously amused.

"The matter of the stoning of this Indio," the *sargento* went on, "is dismissed. But there are much more serious charges against you."

"A charge?" Buckley asked, dumfounded. "I am the one who is making a charge. Some German—"

"Sí, sí, I know about these extraordinary Germans. Just sit over there on that bench, *hombre.* After some food perhaps you can think more clearly. For it is obvious you are either loco or an escaped criminal. I'll soon know which."

Buckley started again on his tirade about the pigboat but stopped when the sentry came from the jail corridor. A tin plate of stewed meats and vegetables, sending up an almost visible aroma of steam, wiped the *sargento* from Buckley's sight.

"So now if it conforms," the *sargento* said ten minutes later, after the prisoner had scraped

Jim Buckley, the engineer, had dreamed of land and green grass.

the last smirch of gravy from the plate, "since you are no longer befuddled from hunger, you can answer my questions." He took up a pen. "How are you called?"

"Buckley, junior engineer—that is, I was."

"You read that in the papers, I suppose?"

"What do you mean, read it in the papers?"

"It was allowed to be published in the Buenos Aires papers, since the war is over. The *Kilpatric* struck a floating mine according to the inquiry. Doubtless you read the notices in *La Prensa* and *La Nación* and *El Mundo.* Or don't you read Spanish?"

"What the hell would I be doing reading Spanish on a life raft?"

"Yes, I know. You were on a life raft. But you picked out the wrong raft. And that preposterous story about some Germans shooting it up—that's enough to hang you, *hombre.*"

"Preposterous? I saw it with my own eyes! I saw my own pards slaughtered when they were already half-dead!"

"Yes? And I suppose you can even tell me their names?"

"Of course I can. Red Divens was one, and there was Porky Johnson, the pantryman, and Drip Nyborg, an oiler. He was from the engineer department like myself. And there were three Panameños from the steward's department, and the quartermaster—but he died out at sea."

The *sargento* looked at the sentry. "This is a peculiar circumstance! This *hombre* mentions

some names and they are not fictitious. Divens, Johnson, Nyborg—where did he get those names?"

The sentry shook his head as if at a baffling mystery but then the *sargento* gave a sigh of relief. "Why, of course!" the latter said. "A list of the missing was published in Buenos Aires two weeks ago. These names were on the list. *Por Dios,* that explains the matter!"

"What matter?" Buckley asked.

"Why, these men you are talking about," the *sargento* said. "They were among the survivors who were thrown ashore on the beach in a capsized life raft yesterday."

"You mean they're saved!" Buckley leaned forward clutching the desk, gasping. "My pards—"

"Sit down, *hombre,* don't get excited. And don't act a part which is based on such nonsense. Yes, your pards, as you call them, are saved. But they said nothing about any German submarine. So I am afraid, now that you have made yourself out an impostor, you will have to explain to the *Oficina de Migración* just what you are doing on this coast."

Buckley sank back to the bench, dazed as if from a blow. He rubbed his forehead, trying desperately to think it out. A capsized life raft—Porky, Montana Red, Drip—Buckley himself tossed ashore on those rocks. Could it have been those rocks that had knocked him out, and not a slug from a German machine gun?

He said half to himself, muttering, "The Germans, the sub, the rubber boat—*I dreamed it all!*"

CHAPTER III

CHICAL-CÓ HOSPITALITY

WHEN he could gather his wits, Buckley cried, "So they got ashore safe!" Then he whooped wildly, "Where are they?"

"Right here in Chical-có and having the time of their lives," the *sargento* said, laughing. "But wait a minute. Sit down. You aren't getting out of this so easily." He motioned the sentry to guard the door. The wagon driver and the Indio with the bruised head stood on either side of Buckley ready to grab his arms.

"Now serve yourself not to fidget and jump. You are shaking all over. Yes, your *amigos* are safe. They are guests of the only *norteamericano* family in town, and there is quite a fiesta going on right now, I understand, with the *ricos* and their wives and daughters assisting the reception. Too bad you're missing it."

"Then take me there! I belong there!" Buckley pleaded. "What are you keeping me prisoner for?"

"Now, wait. Let me understand this peculiar matter. You say you are willing to face these *amigos* of yours—and after that curious discrepancy in your story about the Germans and the submarine?"

Buckley stood dumb a moment. The mention of those Germans was like a dash of cold water. He put both palms against his temples rocking his head as if trying to shake off a nightmare. "I can't get it straight," he said helplessly. "If they didn't mention the sub, then maybe there wasn't any. Maybe—"

"Maybe what? Take it easy. Serve yourself to sit down. I will listen, if you choose to retract."

Buckley tried desperately to bring it all back. "We were in the surf. They kept telling me to watch out for the combers because they were big ones. They would roll us hard. We capsized—I mean that's what they said. I don't remember capsizing. I remember we were all laughing and yipping for a long time, ever since we'd sighted land. Maybe a comber got us and something hit me when we went over. The comber rolled us all but I got caught in the kelp and the rest got ashore somehow."

The *sargento* nodded in understanding. "*Sí, sí.* A reasonable account, now that you have had food and can think. But again: your discrepancy—a figment, I suppose?"

"That might be the answer," Buckley admitted vaguely. "A figment. Maybe I saw a spar or flotsam or the fin of a shark, or anything sticking out of the water and I thought it was a periscope. I was seeing things. We were all seeing things. We were all daft, not enough blood in our brains or our eyes. That's it! You said the right word—a figment!"

"I am inclined to think that you are being honest in this incredible affair," the *sargento* said thoughtfully. "You have given the first plausible explanation of yourself, and your appearance. *Bueno!*" he said briskly. "And now I will take you to the survivors of the wreck and have them identify you. But first I will explain the happy outcome to these plaintiffs."

The Indio and the ox driver seemed bewildered as well as disappointed. "They say," the *sargento* translated, "that a gaucho who assisted in your capture is hunting on the beach for the bodies of your *amigos.* I explained that your *amigos* are already rescued, so they are going back to tell the gaucho to hunt no further." He got up, put on his cap and said genially, "Now, if it conforms, you will come with me in my car."

As an afterthought, he picked up a can of cigars, passed it to the plaintiffs and then to the maligned American. As a second afterthought he took a flask of guaro brandy from his desk. "Let us all drink to this pleasant solution of the whole problem. And by the way, you need a sombrero." He concluded, as the sentry produced one, "Now you are ready to take your place in the fiesta!"

That guaro went straight to Buckley's head. He wanted to jump and flap his arms and roar. He scarcely remembered a thing until the *sargento* turned the car into the driveway of a big, tiled house. Evidently this was beyond the edge of the town for the background of this hacienda with its servants' huts, garage, tankhouse and warehouse, was a treeless plain stretching to the horizon, unbroken except for the many windmills.

In the foreground as they drove past the warehouse, Buckley saw a sign on the adobe wall which read:

Pan-States Pump Machinery Corp., Houston, Texas, U.S.A. "Alf Carter, *Unico Importador y Agente.*

Jim Buckley felt at home at last! Alf Carter —there was a good American name; Houston—there was a real town; and U.S.A.—there were three letters to restore the soul!

When the *sargento* stopped at the veranda, Buckley could hear the bone-tingling rhythm of a marimba in the patio behind the house, and he could hear the merry hum of voices, of laughter, of castanets, of heels clicking a tango to *La Moracha.* He felt youth in his blood again, after days of old age in an exhausted, half-dead body. Here was what he had missed—the reception the castaways had all dreamed and laughed about upon first sighting land!

THE house *mozo* who came out to the car listened to the *sargento's* announcement and, as he listened, his mouth opened dumbly.

"I told him I had found another shipwrecked *norteamericano,*" the *sargento* said, chuckling, as the *mozo* ran into the house. "Señor Carter will welcome you, so will his charming daughter, the Señorita Betty."

The *mozo* came back with a slim, dark-eyed girl who looked and spoke like a Porteña from Buenos Aires. But her sleeveless white dress, silk stockings, tennis shoes, reminded Buckley of the girls he might have seen in any summer resort in the States. She spoke to the *sargento* in Spanish first, then looked at Buckley, startled. The *sargento* must have mentioned that embarrassing little point about the "figment" for the girl had been on the verge of offering her hand when she drew it back.

"This is the Señorita Carter," the *sargento* said, turning to Buckley. Then to the girl, "This man, *señorita,* has had a very harrowing experience you may understand. Fortune has buffeted him, so have the rocks of the beach. He is confused. Starvation, a roll in the combers, dragged back to sea again—he will tell you all about it."

"I am confused, too," the girl said. "Does he mean he wants to see the other survivors—see them face to face?"

"*Si, señorita,*" the *sargento* answered. "That is proof enough to me that he is what he purports to be. His *amigos* will clear up the puzzle."

The girl stared so long that Buckley was conscious of his unshaven face, his ragged trousers and torn shoes. No wonder her eyes were puzzled and suspicious. Besides he still felt groggy from that jolt of guaro—and he looked it.

"I don't know what to think," she said. "I better call my father first. He's in the patio with the guests—"

"All I want is to see my pards," Buckley begged impatiently. "Can't you understand? I thought they were all dead. I still can't believe what's happened. If you'll only let me see them so I'll know I'm not dreaming!"

"Yes, of course you can see them," she said hurriedly. "No one will stop you from that. But I don't believe—" she checked herself. "Yes. Come in."

The *sargento* gave Buckley a sidelong glance as if his suspicions had been aroused again. "If I am mistaken about you," he said under his breath, "then you will have put me in a very humiliating position."

It was only a few steps through the house to the walled-in patio behind, but each step was like trudging up a steep hill. Buckley's heart slugged, for this was like walking to a tomb to witness a resurrection. Perhaps that was just what it was! He had seen them die, and yet by some incredible miracle wrought by their will to live, they had cheated death again—after cheating it every day since the *Kilpatric* had gone down. He could not believe it, even when he actually saw Drip Nyborg standing there in the patio garden looking at him!

The shade trees and ferns were so thick that Buckley had to squint as if into the dusk. Days of the burning sun and glittering water had puffed his eyeballs and made them hard, slowing the adjustment of his eyes to light or dark. And the crowd itself dazzled him—a rollicking crowd of the local *ricos* of the town, of black-haired señoritas, of marimba players, of Indio houseboys passing trays of wine and cakes. And there was the host—a lanky, sandy-haired man who stood out as the "only *norteamericano* in town."

They were all feting the heroes, who sat with five or six señoritas at a large rattan garden table. Buckley had expected to see salt-stained rags, the undress blues of the Maritime Service, but he remembered what the *sargento* had said. Their rags had been replaced with suits of clean white drill. He saw all this even at a distance when he had to fill in their lineaments with his imagination, as a man will when he sees a stranger in the distance and mistakes him for a friend. But they all looked ghastly pale. That was because they had shaved perhaps, though it could hardly account for the pallor which was like the cheese color of the dead.

Jim Buckley stopped in his tracks. He had walked down only one of the steps from the back veranda and now he had to cling to the *sargento's* arm.

Because of the hilarity and drinking no one noticed the new castaway standing there like a man stricken with some hidden malady. Even Betty Carter failed to hear the gasp in his throat as she left him and hurried to call her father.

For a brief instant, due to his lightheadedness and his twenty days of suffering, Jim Buckley's reason faltered. He thought to himself, "That's what death is like. You see your friends somewhere in the next world, but their faces are changed."

Then he came to his senses.

"They aren't my shipmates!" he shouted breathlessly.

"So!" the *sargento* snorted, shaking off the clutching hand. "The Señorita Carter was right! She said you were an impostor!"

Buckley did not even hear this. Nor did he notice the host, Alf Carter, who came stalking toward him. He noticed only the round table and the men who had risen to their feet. They all stood up in unison because of their hostess, Betty Carter, who had just come to their table. And thus Buckley could see them clearly for the first time.

The one whom he had seen first, the only one he'd thought he recognized, was not Drip Nyborg. Drip had vanished as completely as a ghost. And that fat one was not Porky Johnson. It was a blond man with slack lips and popping blue eyes. As he raised his arm to his forehead, Buckley could see him in the rubber boat raising his arm in the same quick jerk to bring it down hurling fire and lead.

Here were the murderers who had come ashore in the *Kilpatric's* stolen life raft, drinking and feasting in their victims' stead.

ONE German rubbing his forehead, another giving a frightened start, another slipping behind a potted palm—all this was unnoticed, for the young señoritas seemed to be the startled ones.

Betty Carter no doubt had made her announcement without any dramatics. She was too good a hostess for that. Buckley could see her give a shrug of her shoulders and force a smile as she told her guests what had happened. "A beachcomber who says he was in your life raft—only I don't believe him." That was perhaps all she said, and she might have added, "He has had a little too much sugar-cane brandy no doubt."

After the first unnoticed stiffening, the Germans smiled, shook their heads. One of them came toward Buckley and the others in groups of twos left the table, spread out. The two dozen guests in the patio knew by now that there was a disturbance of some sort. They all turned to look.

Buckley stood his ground, feeling the support of the *sargento* gripping his arm. He needed that steadying influence as he gagged for breath and shouted. He was face to face with the host, Alf Carter, but he shouted at the whole patio, "They're the ones! They're the Germans from the pigboat! They killed my shipmates!"

Marimbas stopped their song on an unfinished chord, the players standing up. A señorita somewhere among the flowers screamed like a parrot. Every guest was standing now. But in his blinding rage Buckley could see only the faces of the Germans floating in front of his eyes like bobbing corks. The pallor of men long cooped up in a U-boat was suffused now with the red of anger. But that was the only betraying reaction. Otherwise they were icy calm.

The German who had walked toward Buckley was a round-headed man with eyes that had the shine of bright blue glass. He spoke softly and without the slightest tremor of his thick lips. "Just who is this unfortunate fellow?" He must have spent many years in the States for he had no trace of an accent.

"You bloodthirsty rats!" Buckley yelled, stretching both hands. He clawed the air, trying to reach for the German's throat, but the *sargento* held him back.

"Don't tear us to pieces," another German said lightly. "We are all friends here. But just who are you?"

"Take him into the house," Alf Carter said quietly, "and we'll find out what's wrong without frightening everybody."

"You heard what the Señor Carter says, *hombre.*" The *sargento* spoke in the same quiet voice.

Buckley stood panting hard. If he yelled and howled and struggled it would give these Germans a good excuse to attack him. They had guns no doubt, hidden in their armpits like gangsters from whom the Nazis learned their tricks and code. If Buckley resisted this police officer they might come to the aid of the law. They could even shoot him and be thanked for it. He did not resist.

As he was led into the house, he noticed that the Germans followed. No one had asked them to come in, but since they were the butt of this madman's accusations they had a right to attend what seemed to be a sort of preliminary hearing.

In the main room of the Carter bungalow, Buckley faced them. Two of them sat down, flanked by their companions who stood behind their chairs. Despite their maddening calm it was obvious that they wanted to keep close together, like animals during the thunder of a coming storm.

The *sargento* stood behind Buckley ready to reach for his arms on the slightest pretext. Some of the male guests, the younger *ricos,*

filled the doorways, their faces serious at first, then merely curious, then amused. Betty Carter was the only frightened one, standing behind her father, her hand on his arm.

Carter was thoroughly put out at this interruption in the festivities. "Just who is this man anyway? Looks like a Yank, so I'll listen—for one minute, no more."

"He has assumed the name of Buckley," the *sargento* said, "and the occupation of a junior engineer on the *Kilpatric*. Since these señores never saw him and he is posing as someone he is not, I argue that he must be a fugitive from justice."

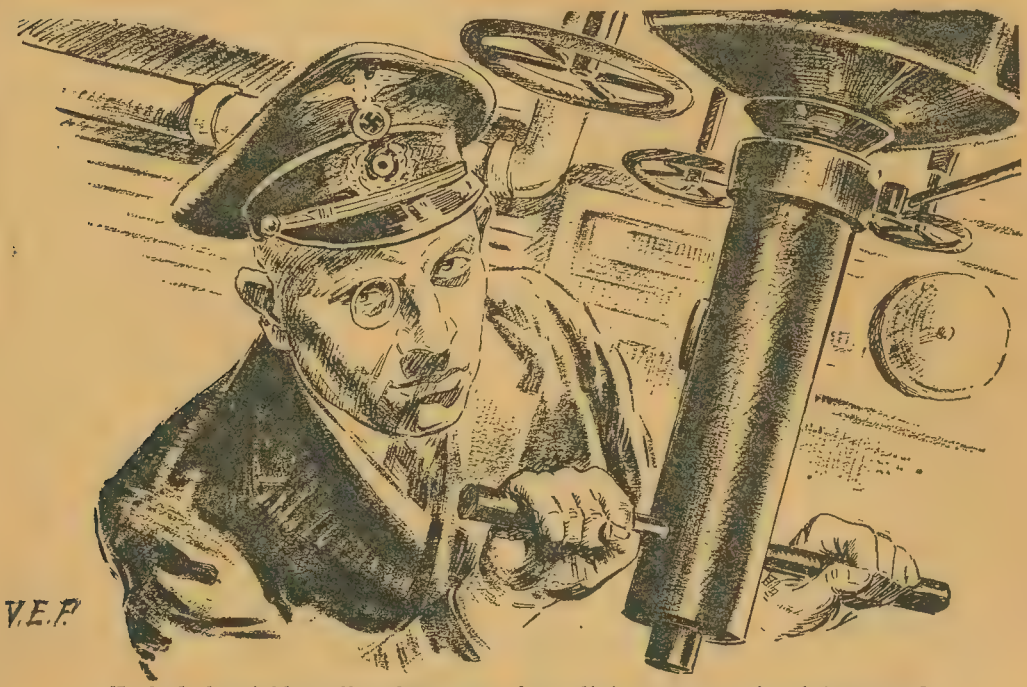
"What identification did these German rats show you?"

"Their Maritime Service caps for one thing," Carter said quietly. "Some had sleeve insignia—the anchor and wreath. Two had the red U.S.M.S. on their jumpers. Why should we doubt them anyway?"

"Moreover," the *sargento* added, "one or two had papers, water-soaked but legible, and a rayon chart which your American Marine supplies on life rafts."

"They stole the clothes and papers from the men they murdered!" Buckley cried with unsuppressed fury.

"That is always the alibi of a criminal," the



He had the sickly pallor that comes from living too long in pigboats and Buckley knew he was from the sub that had sunk his shipmates.

"A pretty slim argument, *Sargento,*" Carter said. "If he's a fugitive, why would he come here and raise hell like this?"

Everyone, including the girl, was impressed with this logic. Carter himself seemed disposed to give more than one minute to solving the problem. He looked at the prisoner, suddenly intrigued by his burning eyes, his strong unshaven jaw, his gangling scrawny body. "When you arrested him," he said to the *sargento,* "you looked for some sort of identification, I suppose?"

"He had nothing, *señor,* except a broken watch he had given to an Indio for some food, and likewise a knife which had been taken from him."

Buckley burst out excitedly, "What identification did these German rats show you?"

"Their Maritime Service caps for one thing," Carter said quietly. "Some had sleeve insignia—the anchor and wreath. Two had the red U.S.M.S. on their jumpers. Why should we doubt them anyway?"

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"They stole the clothes and papers from the men they murdered!" Buckley cried with unsuppressed fury.

"That is always the alibi of a criminal," the *sargento* grunted. "If the clothes are not proof of identity, then the life raft itself is complete proof. The usual raft of your tankers, six metal barrels with a deck and a well, and the regular size, eight by ten, not to mention the name of the *Kilpatric*. There were many witnesses who saw the raft in the surf and they saw it capsize—*with these men on board!* Are you trying to say these are not the men we rescued?"

THIS brought smiles from the guests in the doorways. The Germans laughed aloud.

"I can clear up the mystery in a word, Señor Carter," the *sargento* said. "This *hombre* made up the story of the

submarine and then at the police station he confessed it was all a figment of his imagination. He has been without food and was confused in his head. But when I fed him, his brains seemed to clear and he told the truth—he had dreamed it all."

Carter looked at the prisoner. "You mean you confessed there had been no such thing as the sub and the shooting?"

Buckley was stumped. "Well I—I thought I imagined it. When I heard my shipmates were all saved I couldn't figure any other answer except that I dreamed it. I *wanted* to think that. I told the *sargento* perhaps there was no pigboat at all, no Nazis machine-gunning us, no—" He caught the girl's eyes studying him hotly. Her look distracted him and he shuffled his feet like a schoolboy about to be punished.

As for the girl, she was anxious to put an end to this wretched interview. She said, not so much with anger as with pity, "Don't let them take him to jail, Dad. He doesn't need the police, he needs a doctor. Let Dr. Alvarez see him and talk to him."

"A good solution, *señorita!*" the *sargento* agreed. "He is suffering from some mania as we all clearly see, and the medico will advise us what to do. Call him."

"Wait a minute," Buckley said. "I won't shout any more. I've shouted the truth but you're all deaf to it, so I'll try something else. I'll admit these rats have got away with their plot so far. They've got clothes and papers and the life raft and they got the name of the *Kilpatric* from the raft. But the names of my shipmates"—he hesitated—"yes, they could have gotten the names from the list of missing in the newspapers."

"Just what are you talking about?" the *sargento* asked. "They gave us their names when they first reached the shore. They had no time to read newspapers. Besides," he finished with a sly grin, "who reads Spanish on a raft? Your own words, if I remember correctly."

"Then the names are faked!" Buckley announced with a sudden desperate hope. "We didn't keep a log book on the raft. You can telegraph to the U.S.M.S. branch at Buenos Aires and check up."

"Needless to say, we telegraphed their names to Buenos Aires within an hour of their rescue. And as for checking up, we have already done that in the back copies of *La Prensa* and *El Mundo*. Among the list of missing there were eight—these señors you now face."

"Eight? There were only seven on the raft," Buckley said, "Unless you count the quartermaster who died."

One of the Germans giggled. "It so happens that I am the quartermaster you speak of. My name is Kimbrough. But I am not dead, as you see."

Buckley's jaw dropped as the round-headed German gave a stiff smile and a stiffer bow. How did he know the quartermaster's name was Kimbrough? There were no papers of identification on Kimbrough's person, Buckley remembered distinctly, for they had emptied his pockets before burying him at sea!

The German made the most of his distraction. "Evidently you don't like to have a dead man introduce himself. Very well, I will introduce you to some live ones. This is my shipmate Porky—Porky Johnson from the steward's department, a pantryman."

A German with tight pink cheeks like sausages got up and bowed. The bow was a self-conscious one this time and the glass-blue eyes shifted. But this went unnoticed, for everyone was watching Buckley's crinkling, sweating forehead.

He tried to think it out. How did they know all this about Porky Johnson? Porky had jumped overboard. They might have recovered his body, yes, but like Kimbrough and Buckley himself, Porky had not stopped to get his credentials when the crew abandoned the flaming *Kilpatric*. One or two might have been identified by a watch or a letter or a paper saved purely by chance, but Porky had nothing.

The next was "Red Divens," a scrawny German who forgot himself and clicked his heels. They had picked the right man to impersonate Colorado Red! This fellow had the stamp of a gunman on him, the stamp of the hereditary killer. Apparently the only Junker of the gang, he had worn a monocle once which left a telltale wrinkle under one eye, an arched crease below the eyebrow.

Buckley rubbed his own eyebrows which were burning hot. He kept mumbling, "How did they get the names?" It was an unfortunate reaction, like a lunatic talking to himself. And like a lunatic obsessed with a joke of his own, he burst out suddenly in a harsh guffaw. This happened when a Nazi with a long neck and tapering bullet head was introduced as *"Jim Buckley, junior engineer!"*

The laugh startled everyone. There was no further doubt. This poor derelict was neither drunk nor an impostor; he was out and out crazy.

"So you're Jim Buckley!" The insane laughter turned to jeering. "And that one's Porky and you over there, Red Divens. If Montana Red could only meet you face to face, and if he could only have a gun in his hand when you meet! Buckley, Porky, Red, Drip—which one's Drip Nyborg? What's the difference? It doesn't matter which is which, if I only knew where you got the names."

To everyone's astonishment, Betty Carter interrupted. "Drip Nyborg is the only one who isn't here. I noticed he left the patio and slipped upstairs before we all came in."

The Germans looked around at each other. The bullet-headed one said steadily, "Drip is a nervous case because of the horrors of the ship-

wreck. He thought this madman was going to tear us all to pieces, so he slipped away, to our room I believe."

Carter cried in a rage, "This is going too far! Scaring my guests so one of them goes off and hides. Tell Drip to come down here. I'll show him no one's going to tear him to pieces!"

The Germans looked at each other again. This time it was the round-headed one who said, "Yes, of course, quite right. Why not? I'll call him."

Buckley scarcely heard these side remarks. That outburst of jeering laughter had left him disheartened as well as breathless. He groped for a chair and as he flopped there, dazed and sick, it seemed to everyone that he had given up, cornered at last.

Betty Carter must have thought that he was going to faint for she ran to the sideboard for a glass of water. It was not necessary, for a houseboy stepped in from the front veranda and announced, "The medico is come."

Buckley did not see the medico come in. He was watching the stairs through the arched doorway where he saw two men coming down. One was the German who had gone up for Drip Nyborg. The other was—no, it could not be the man he seemed to be! Buckley rubbed his eyes violently, stared, gasped.

It was one of his shipmates! It was one of his fellow sufferers who had starved and whimpered and prayed through those twenty days of hell and salt. Buckley remembered that last ghastly moment when he saw him on his knees shrieking at the Germans in the rubber boat, begging them not to kill him.

"Drip! It's you! You're saved!" Buckley jumped to his feet and ran across the room. His voice broke as he threw out his arms. "Drip, you and me—we're the only ones who lived! You'll tell 'em, Drip! Tell 'em who I am! Tell 'em about the raft and how these killers—" He stopped, feeling a sudden sickening turn in his stomach.

Something, perhaps the look in Drip Nyborg's eyes, warned him of what was coming. For the look brought back that last moment on the raft when his shipmates were falling on every side riddled with bullets. In that moment he remembered distinctly Drip Nyborg had called to the murderers in a foreign tongue which might have been Danish, as Buckley had thought after it was all over. It was hard to identify the language by those frantic guttural shrieks. And at the time, with the machine gun banging, Buckley did not try to identify it at all. But he knew the truth now. Nyborg was not a Dane. He was a German and he had called out to these rats in their own lingo!

Right now he spoke quietly in English while everyone in the room watched this meeting.

"I don't know what this man is raving about," Drip Nyborg said, his face expressionless. "Who is he anyway?"

CHAPTER IV

NO HIDING PLACE

BUCKLEY sat in a cot in the warehouse, staring at a bespectacled little man with a pockmarked face. The medico, Dr. Alvarez, must have been something of a psychiatrist. At least he had managed to calm the hysterical patient by some very persuasive arguments, as well as a soothing voice.

"Yes, I will listen to everything you have to tell me, *señor*," the medico had said back there in the main house. "Yes, yes, they are Germans no doubt, and murderers. I am not contradicting you at all. But why spend your strength struggling when your arms are pinioned behind your back?"

That was what the medico said after Buckley had swung a blow at Drip Nyborg's chin. What happened next had not been subject to Buckley's decision. They had dragged him out of the house anyway. And then the medico's voice had taken effect. The "patient" realized that his frenzied struggling would prove what they all wanted to believe. He calmed down.

They took him to a corner room of the big warehouse which faced the main street. The single window, after the fashion of all first-story windows in Chical-có, was barred with wrought iron grillwork, hence the room was as good as a prison cell. But actually it was the warehouse office furnished with metal filing cases, a desk, chairs, a cot used by the *sereno* on his night watch.

The bespectacled little doctor and the *sargento* were the only ones who came in with the prisoner. The doctor filled a paper cup with water from the filter at the rear of the office, opened his medicine kit, tapped a paper of powder into the water. He shrugged when Buckley refused to drink it.

"Very well, *señor*. I thought a sedative might help. But I see you don't need it. You are quite calm."

Buckley sat on the cot struggling for breath. He was glad when the *sargento*, in response to a nod from the little medico, went out and stood guard at the door. Without his bulky presence the room seemed airier.

"Now then, you are thinking things out," the medico said, drawing up a chair so that he sat facing his prisoner. "Perhaps you can tell me your troubles."

"You expect me to sit here talking while those Nazis get out of town?"

"Not exactly, *señor*. Those Nazis as you call them, have gone back to the patio with the other guests. As for getting out of town—well, yes, they have reservations on the Panair for Buenos Aires and New York, but as I just heard, they are not leaving for the Bahia airport till tomorrow morning."

They would have to stay a while, Buckley reflected, for a sudden flight would have aroused suspicion. They must pretend to ignore the "madman's" accusation entirely.

"So," the medico observed, "we have plenty of time for our little talk."

"Why do you want to talk to a man you think is loco?"

"I do not think you are loco, *señor*. A temporary confusion perhaps, due to malnutrition." The doctor took off his glasses, spinning them on the ribbon attached to his lapel. "I believe you honestly think these seamen are Germans."

"You think I'm honest. That's a good start," Buckley said, breathing steadily for the first time. "But get this—my shipmates were massacred in that life raft. The two who weren't killed immediately jumped just as I did. And they might have drifted ashore, the same as I did. There was a gaucho searching the beach for them, but this sheepheaded sergeant sent word to him not to search any more. My pards had been found, he thought. And I thought so too until I"—his voice began to shake again—"until I saw that snake-eyed bunch of killers—"

"*Si, señor*, I understand. But be calm. We shall send a searching party, but first, may I say a word?" He spun his glasses on the ribbon, making a glittering circle in front of Buckley's face. It might have been a hypnotic trick. At least his voice was strangely soothing. "I have found, *señor*, that it is a good procedure to show a patient the cause of his malady as the first step in curing it. I have an opinion as to the cause of your delusion—"

Buckley groaned. "If you're here to talk about delusions you may as well get out!"

"But this will interest you vitally, *señor*. There has been a warning sent out all along the littoral that Nazi refugees will attempt to land in South America. They have friends here among the Argentine fascists, the Brazilian *integralistas*, et cetera. The Federal police have been watching these fascists and have had definite information concerning some of the arch Nazis who are trying to enter our country."

"Doesn't that fit?" Buckley cried. "That gang out there in the patio—"

"I know, *señor*. I understand what you are thinking. In your state of mind you draw hasty conclusions. You see a group of men who obviously are not Argentinos. They are Nordics. Some even have a foreign accent, but that is not unusual on the crew of a freighter. But you imagine, almost plausibly, I admit, that they *might* be Nazi fugitives. The possibility worked upon your mind. You are a *norteamericano* yourself and have an insensate hate for the Nazis which we in the Argentine do not share with you. You wanted to catch some Nazi criminals. You thought you had found some. The obsession could not be shaken off."

"So that's your hunch!" Buckley snorted. "You're no different from all the rest. You think I'm raving! If you'd seen what I saw out there in the surf, you'd be raving yourself. Especially if no one believed you. You'd yell bloody murder! But I'm through with yelling. I'm going to talk softly and slowly, because I've got to think while I'm talking."

"*Bueno, señor!*" the little man said enthusiastically. "I always encourage my patients to diagnose themselves. Now what started you on this—we won't call it a delusion—on this little mistake?"

"LEAVE my mistake out of it. Leave me out of it. I'm going back to what you said about the Federal police in Buenos Aires. That's what started it. A lot of war criminals are hunting for a hideout right here in the Argentine. Some of them, the big ones, the arch criminals, got out of Germany in a sub. We all knew that's what they would try."

Buckley kept talking aloud but he was thinking it all out as he talked. "They plan with some of their fascist friends where to land."

"They arrange with someone to meet them here and take them to their hideout. Their hideout is all planned, too. But then Buenos Aires sends out this alarm to watch for them; and even gets wind of one plot to land. They may have got this from our Intelligence in Germany or your Federal police right here."

Buckley got up and paced, while the medico followed him with his eyes. "Yes?" the latter said. "You are building up a good imaginary case. Then what?"

"The contact man, I mean the Argentine fascist who was to take them to their hideout, gets scared. Maybe your Federal police had him spotted. Anyway he doesn't show up. So these Germans and their pigboat are stuck here with no place to go."

"Stuck here? I do not understand that idiom," the medico said.

"I mean they can't get to their hideout which may be way off in the Cordillera somewhere. It's a place where they may have to spend years, at least till the heat about war criminals cools off. Maybe they know where they're going to hide out but they can't get there without being seen by the natives. A bunch of blondes landing on the coast would attract attention. It's not so easy to avoid all villages and farms and roads. Someone, maybe just an Indio, would spot them. They couldn't pose as Argentinos or Crillos, and they couldn't just disappear in the jungles. Up in the Amazon, yes, but down here it's all open country. They'd have to explain why they landed on the beach."

Buckley talked faster, his voice rising to a higher and higher pitch. "While they're conning their U-boat along the shore and waiting, they see our raft lolling out there in the ground swells. They shoot us up and take our raft—"

"Please to speak without shouting, *señor*.

You are thinking rationally enough, I grant you. You are thinking just as all of us have been thinking since the war ended: there will be German criminals landing on our coast. But these survivors from the *Kilpatric* whom you have never seen before—"

"I saw three of them beyond the surf out there, firing over the cork ring of their rubber boat—"

The medico waved this aside. "*Sí, sí,* I know all about that. But before the incident of the surf, you never saw them before. Or am I wrong? I arrived at the bungalow just as you called one of them by name."

"You mean that whimpering rat, Nyborg? Sure I saw him before! He was in the crew of the *Kilpatric,* the engineer department. He was an oiler. He yelled out in German to those crooks. What he said I don't know. But he said the right thing, because they let him live. And that's where they got all their dope. They found out from Drip Nyborg all about the raft and the wreck and the survivors. They didn't need the newspapers. They had it all first hand. No wonder they could put up such a good front! They let Drip Nyborg do all their talking, I'll bet!"

The medico was spinning his glasses again. "This is a curious point you just mentioned. Yes, the one you tried to knock down, quite so! He is the one who answered our questions when we all went down to the beach after the rescue!" The ribbon spun around his forefinger, unspun. Suddenly he got up and hurried out.

When the door was shut again and locked, Buckley could hear the doctor and the *sargento* talking a moment and through the grilled window he saw the former running off to the veranda of the main house.

"What did that doc tell you?" Buckley called out.

"He said he would have a houseboy bring me a drink," the *sargento* answered jovially. "He does not want me to take you to jail just yet. Well, I am in no hurry. I am enjoying the music, and I shall enjoy a drink of guaro, too."

The marimbas were thrumming again in back of the house. Evidently the incident of the mad beachcomber had been dismissed if not forgotten. The festivities were at their height, more hectic perhaps, for the buzz of voices was audible even though the patio was on the other side of the house. The musicians, purposely, no doubt, played livelier tunes and in a faster tempo. But this only served to increase the excitement in the air.

A white-haired old *rico,* helped by a *dueña* and a houseboy, came out and got into a car. He seemed to have suffered a mild attack of some sort. The lurid interruption—a crazed derelict raving about a German sub and the murder of his half-dead shipmates—all this may have been too much for the aged guest. His car drove off, the houseboy went back to the veranda, and then another guest came wandering out.

He was the German with the long neck and bullet-shaped head.

He sauntered casually the full length of the veranda, peering through the hanging ferns toward the grilled window in the warehouse.

It had not occurred to Buckley until this moment that he was a marked man. They would have to give him a little time to live, of course, but it would not be long.

THE music of the orchestra, vibrating in the tense air, reminded Buckley of the beauty and light of marsh fire. The hilarity was hectic, like the false radiance in the marshes of jungle rivers, breathed from the rottenness beneath. For beneath the dancing, the soft-voiced and affable guests, the señoritas in their exquisite dresses, there was the putrefaction smouldering—the eight "heroes" for whom this fiesta was being given.

Buckley saw one of them still lurking on the veranda, his long neck stretching as he peered through the hanging ferns. The neck contracted, turtle-like, for a moment when a houseboy brought a drink to the *sargento.* Then, when the houseboy went back into the house, the German stepped down from the veranda, strolled toward the warehouse.

He took the *cigarillo* from his mouth, gave a casual wave to the *sargento* and kept strolling, but as he passed he said indifferently, "The crazy man has quieted down I see."

"Yes, *señor,*" the *sargento* called affably. "We are taking him to the *Oficina de Migración* presently and then to jail. So you need have no worry."

"Worry? Pouf! Do not be silly!" the German said testily.

"Pardon my silliness, *señor,* but I noticed the manner in which you watched the window. Hense I reassure you that the prisoner cannot get out."

"I wasn't watching the window!" the German hastened to explain. "I was merely taking a stroll. Too much noise in the patio and too many drinks. A little stroll will clear my head." He turned and sauntered back to the house.

He sauntered slowly, Buckley noticed. "They can't show they're in a hurry. But they can't let me live either."

He must have thought this aloud for the *sargento* turned to the window. "Well, are you talking to me, *hombre,* or to yourself?"

"I'm talking to everybody. I'm telling the world. Those bloodthirsty swine can't let me live. They know sooner or later I'll prove who I am. The Maritime Service will straighten it out when we contact them. These crooks will be out of town by that time, but there'll be a man-hunt and they know it! This whole coast will be warned about them. The pampa will be warned as far as the Andes! No, they've got

to kill me before I can prove my identity!"

The *sargento* shook his head sadly. "You are out of breath, *hombre*. Better lie on the cot and rest. Stretch out. Relax."

But Buckley still gripped the scrolled iron of the window, his eyes fixed on that German who had now reached the veranda. At the top of the veranda steps the prowler turned for a last glance, but continued walking. That was why he bumped smack into Betty Carter, who had come out of the house.

The girl smiled, the German bowed and scraped. Doubtless he gave her the same excuse—"a little stroll to clear the head"—for she showed no surprise or suspicion at finding him out here on this side of the house.

She came directly to the *sargento* and asked him to open the door. The *sargento* obeyed but, alarmed perhaps at her facing this madman alone, he came into the office and stood behind her, his arms tense, one hand on a pistol butt.

The girl tried to smile as she looked up at Buckley. "Dr. Alvarez said you are much better. He is going to ask my father if you can stay here a little longer."

The *sargento* exclaimed, "Stay here! Why, I will not hear of such a thing! He is my prisoner. I must keep him in custody not in a warehouse, but in the municipal jail where he belongs."

"The doctor doesn't want you to take him to jail, and neither do I."

"But keeping this *hombre* on your premises, in your home so to speak—why, you know nothing about him except—"

"Except that he's an American. That's one thing we know about him!"

"I'm glad you've got that straight," Buckley said, "but if you can spot me for an American, how did you get fooled by those Germans?"

The girl's smile vanished. "They are not Germans! When you accuse your own countrymen like that I'm not going to listen to another word from you!"

"I'm asking you to listen to *them*. They don't even talk like Americans, except that sniveling little crook Drip Nyborg. And maybe that round-headed one who did most of the talking. He must have lived in the States, too. But the rest—"

"I know all about the rest," the girl said hotly. "Two of them are Poles and there's a Swede and three Czechs, all of them naturalized." In her anger she forgot that she was talking to a mental case. "They don't speak good English, but what of it? How much good English do you hear in New York? And how much in the steward's department of a freighter?"

The *sargento* laughed. "There is a pointed question, *señorita!* This man purports to be an engineer on a freighter and yet he does not know what the men on a freighter talk like!"

"Is that what *you* think? Buckley asked the girl.

She gave him a level stare and then said frankly, "I don't know a thing about you except that you are a Yankee and that you were not on the *Kilpatric* as you say you were. Eight of the *Kilpatric's* crew say they never saw you before. And as for being an engineer, that may be a—" She stopped but it was clear that she was going to say, "That may be a lie, too."

IT was the *sargento* who said it. "If he is posing as an engineer, we can unmask him easily enough, *señorita*. There are two freighters in port from which we could summon some member of the crew to examine this *hombre*. In my opinion any engineer's donkeyman will reveal him as a liar."

Buckley swore. "We haven't time! God, man, how long do you think those Nazis are going to stay in town now that they know I'm on their trail?"

"No, there's no need to waste any time," the girl agreed calmly. "I can tell if you know the first thing about machinery or not."

She pointed to a cubbyhole in the wall between the office and the main part of the warehouse. Pump machinery, part of it crated, was stacked on the cement floor. Nearest the office, machine parts were arranged for display. "You see that pump on the floor. It's not the kind you have on board a ship. It's the kind my father sells for these windmills on the pampa—"

"But you are telling him, *señorita*. Let him tell you," the *sargento* said shrewdly.

"Very well, what pumps do you have on a freighter?" the girl asked.

"We have a lot of them. Are you kidding me?"

"What are they?" she insisted.

"A general service pump, two main engine bilge pump rams, a ballast pump, another called the ash injector, an auxiliary boiler feed pump. What are you asking *me* for? Why don't you ask that Nazi who's posing as a junior engineer? He's the one who bumped into you on the veranda."

The *sargento* was scratching his leathery jaw. The girl tried again. "Can you name any of those parts on the floor?"

Buckley glanced through the cubbyhole. "There's a sight feed lubricator and that pile of junk looks like old bowl sections. There's a section of line shaft with a built-in sleeve. And that gadget next to it is a bearing retainer."

The *sargento*, recovering from his first touch of chagrin, said, "But what does all this prove, *señorita*? An imposter will assume a vocation that is familiar to him. Yes, he is an *ingeniero*, let us admit. But, *caramba!* what of it?"

The girl was thinking hard, impressed either with the *sargento's* logic or with the *ingeniero's*

logic, there was no telling which. Her eyes narrowed, puzzled, as she said, "I would give a lot to know just who you are!"

"If you are going to wait to find that out, it'll be too late," Buckley pleaded. "You're in a tough spot yourself, housing those rats. I'm a marked man but that doesn't matter. I'm thinking of what may happen to you when they find out they're cornered. They're cool enough now and they were cool enough when they murdered my pards—"

"There he goes again!" the *sargento* wailed. "Why listen to him, *señorita*? He has no new answer. He is a macaw that sticks to one phrase forever."

"He just gave some rather good answers," the girl said.

"Very well, he knows about pumps, and like the pound of a pump, over and over again he pounds out the same words. These *norte-americano* seamen are Germans! *Por Dios,* why should Germans murder people and steal life rafts just to get to Argentina? We accept Germans, we like Germans. Why did they not go to Buenos Aires instead of turning somersaults in our surf?"

"That shows just what they are!" Buckley cried. "They're war criminals and they've got to hide!"

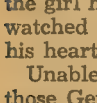
The girl said thoughtfully, "*Sargento,* I want to ask you something. How did the Federal police know that a gang of Nazis planned to land on our coast from a submarine?"

"They caught wind of one plot, I understand, not in Buenos Aires but from their operatives in Europe. Bergen in Norway was the hatching place. But, *señorita,* what has your question to do with the present exigency?"

"That man I bumped into when I came out on the veranda just now," the girl said, half to herself. "He is the one called 'Buckley, a junior engineer on the *Kilpatric.* She looked steadily at the real Jim Buckley. "Both of you can't be the same man. One of you is lying and I'm going to find out who it is."

The *sargento* shook his head, bewildered, as the girl hurried off to the main house. Buckley watched from behind the grilled wrought iron, his heart pounding.

Unable to control himself, he burst out, "If those Germans find out they're suspected, they won't stop at murder. They'll kill anyone who's in their way. If they find things moving too fast, they'll even kill that girl!"



"WHAT'S this? He is on another shouting spree?" said the brown, pockmarked little man coming down the driveway.

Buckley had repeated his lurid prophecy, shouting at the *sargento.* Since the latter had turned stone deaf, it was necessary to shout. Dr. Alvarez coming out of the house a moment after the girl had gone in, heard the words distinctly, *"They'll even kill that girl!"*

"Look, *señor,* please!" The medico came up to the window. "These Germans, as you call them, have not found out that they are suspected. In fact they are not suspected, not in the slightest. So why this frenzy?"

The *sargento* unlocked the door and the doctor came in. "I managed to get Señor Carter aside," he began quietly. "I told him you seemed to talk very rationally."

"Leave me out of it, Doc! We're wasting time. What did you tell him about those Nazis?"

"I said that you would not retract a word. So he asked me what I meant by 'rational.' If you are rational it means you are an out and out impostor. Then he asked me if I actually believed a word of your story." The medico shrugged his little shoulders. "I said no, of course. If I believed you it would seem that I were catching something of the contagion of your malady. Your hallucination is infectious. Such a phenomenon is not unknown to mental pathology. For a moment when I talked to you, I actually wondered if it were a delusion or the truth."

"Is that what you told Carter?"

"No, *señor.* Do I want to be branded loco as you have been branded?" He lowered his voice. "I did, however, persuade him to let you stay here all night. I said I wanted to keep you under observation."

"But how about that cop out there?" Buckley asked. "He said I can't stay here."

"Quite simple." The doctor went to the window and satisfied himself that the *sargento* was not eavesdropping. "I shall tell him that I have given you a sedative and that your reaction was not what I hoped for. It caused a collapse, I shall say. And it will be easily believed in view of your condition. You can act the part, I hope? I shall tell the *sargento* to report the matter to Señor Carter and when he is gone you will simply escape. That is all."

"Escape? What am I escaping from? If I get out of here I'm going straight to that bunch of rats and—" he faltered. "Of course I've got to get a gun first."

"You can hardly expect me to give you a gun," the medico said, laughing. "But I will give you a suggestion. Señor Carter seems inclined to listen to your incredible story—if you can give the slightest jot of proof."

"Then get me out of here," Buckley said eagerly. "I'll do anything you say."

The little doctor waited until the *sargento* strolled within earshot again. "Now serve yourself to drink this, *señor,*" he said to the prisoner. He filled a paper cup from the filter, pretended to pour in a powder. "It will at least relieve this headache you complain of." His voice dropped to a whisper. "Let the effect be gradual."

He went out and Buckley could hear him talking to the *sargento,* then walking off in the

direction of the house. A cab was driving up to the veranda steps. It stopped, a señorita and her *dueña* got in, the cab drove off. As it passed the warehouse, the señorita stared at the *sargento* and the grilled window. Two more guests, a portly Argentino and an old señora wearing a mantilla came out. The marimbas still played but the reception seemed to be breaking up. It was possible that the guests were leaving early because of the incident of the "madman."

This exodus had a sobering effect on Buckley himself. He began to have the feeling of impending disaster. It would not be long before Carter and his daughter were alone in the house with their Nazi guests!

As the precious moments slipped away, he paced like a caged beast. He wanted to howl at the *sargento* to let him out so he could fight. But he suppressed this impulse, remembering that he was supposed to be reacting to an overdose of a sedative. Wildly impatient, he noticed that a large group of the guests started leaving all at once. This meant more time lost, for the medico obviously would have to wait until the driveway was less crowded. It was not until the marimbas stopped thrumming that Dr. Alvarez came out on the veranda.

Buckley turned back from the window and flopped to the cot. He closed his eyes, listened in a fever of impatience as the door opened letting in the sound of voices, the doctor's and the *sargento's*. The door clicked shut. Through half-closed lids he could see the medico.

"If it conforms, *amigo,*" the medico began without lowering his voice, then burst out dramatically, "*Amigo!* Is there something wrong? Please to let me feel your pulse!" His voice dropped. "I spoke to Señor Carter. He will hide you in an upper room." Then in a loud voice again, *Sargento! Sargento!*" The doctor spoke rapidly in Spanish and the *sargento* went hurrying off, his boots clanking on the flagstone walk.

"I told him to get some hot water immediately," the doctor chuckled. "Now then, *amigo,* you are free." He put up his hand as Buckley leaped from the bed. "But not so fast! You have to stoop as you walk behind the hedge to the side of the house. Then I shall take you to a room upstairs. There you must wait patiently until Señor Carter has finished saying good-by to his guests."

"Where's the girl?"

"Talking to one of the seamen. Why does that concern you?"

"Which one is she talking to?" Buckley asked.

"To the *ingeniero,* the one called Jim Buckley. But again, why do you ask?"

"I haven't time to tell you," Buckley said with a grim smile. Betty Carter, he knew, was finding out if that long-necked, bullet-headed Nazi knew anything about pumps! "All right, let's go," he said to the doctor.

There was only one car in the driveway when they went out. It had stopped at a side door where the musicians were packing up their marimbas. This meant another long wait, an awkward one, for the *sargento* had just come out of the house with a tea kettle and was running back to the warehouse.

Buckley hid behind the hedge until the medico beckoned. The last of the guests had gone. The front veranda was empty. The car with the marimba players drove off. But the moment that the fugitive stepped up on the side veranda an enraged yell broke out.

"*Sangre de Cristo,* he is escaped!" the *sargento* shouted, running out of the warehouse office and throwing his kettle on the flagstones.

The shouting kept up. A houseboy ran out to the driveway followed by Carter. But the doctor and his patient had scurried upstairs to the second story, unnoticed.

"Serve yourself not to be excited, *señor,*" the medico advised, opening the door of one of the bedrooms. "Let the hullabaloo go on. They will not search here. You are safe. So go in."

Despite his smile, the brown-faced little man seemed nervous. He took off his spectacles and spun them on the ribbon for no apparent reason except to steady the shake of his hand. The gesture somehow reminded Buckley of that gaucho spinning his three Marias.

"Go on in, *amigo,* and sit down. Rest. Have a *cigarillo* for the nerves."

Buckley went in, noticing that the medico squinted without his glasses. It might be a natural reaction, of course, for the lenses were strong and without them he had to readjust his vision.

At the first step across the threshold, Buckley discovered that two men were waiting for him, one on each side of the door.

From a closet stepped a round-headed man with faded blue eyes. In the bathroom door stood the man with the ghastly face and boyish skin. Drip Nyborg got up from a four-poster bed. The Junker with the monocle-marked eye and hard-clamped Prussian mouth closed the door and bolted it.

CHAPTER V

EXPERIMENT DANGEROUS

THERE were six of them. They all showed their guns but only one held his pointing to Buckley's chest. The gun bores, however, were not as murderous as the eyes of the men. They were not human eyes. They were bloodless, cold, fixed, like the eyes of a reptile that had been stepped on.

The horror of being in the same room with these gangsters paralyzed Buckley for that first swift moment. He could not even yell for help.

And when the moment passed he knew that the first to come to his help would be the *sargento* who would probably shoot him and then ask what this was all about.

He stood silent, holding his breath, and then realized that the round-headed German was saying something that was worth listening to. The speech was made quietly, although this was not necessary what with the commotion on the driveway below. The *sargento* was shouting at some peons passing on the street, evidently asking if they had seen the fugitive. Carter shouted at his houseboys to find his daughter and the next moment he was calling to the *sargento* to help in the same search—not for the escaped prisoner but for the girl.

Inside the quiet upstairs room, the round-headed Nazi was saying affably, "We have no wish to kill you, not even to harm you. But that, of course, is up to you. I do not think you will be so foolish as to yell."

Buckley recovered from his first shock. After the helpless gaping and tightening of his neck muscles, like a man in a nightmare trying to shout, he found that his vocal cords worked. "You're talking sense," he said. "Most of you damned Nazis think that killing is the one solution to everything, but you're smart. Killing me after I accused you is the one thing you can't do."

The spokesman took this with a fat, complacent grin. If he had had medals and a uniform instead of the plain suit of tropic drill he was wearing he could have doubled for Goering himself. "No, of course we can't kill you. It would be too much trouble anyway. Why waste powder when that police sergeant out there will do the job for us?" He snapped something in German to one of the men standing behind the prisoner.

"Drip was a friend of yours, I believe," the round-head said. "In a life raft with you for twenty days, sharing your hardships. He was not a friend of ours. We never heard of him before we saw him in that raft begging us not to kill him. We let him live so we could find out where the raft came from. After that he collaborated with us. He even helped us prove that you are a crazy man and a liar." Again the fat Goering smile. "So what would you like to do to him?"

Buckley did not answer except for the hot flash in his eyes.

The fat Nazi went on tauntingly, "What did they do to collaborators in France and Norway and Holland and Belgium? Just what you want to do. You want to tear his head from his shoulders and throw it out there to the crows. Well, why don't you do it? We are not stopping you."

Drip Nyborg began gibbering, his knees shook, he bleated.

But the spokesman went on suavely, "You see he is not a soldier nor a true Nazi. Just an oiler on a ship. He is not in our class. We don't want him. He was afraid of us and did everything we commanded, but we cannot rely on a coward indefinitely. We would like to be rid of him. So I am giving you full permission. Here"—he reached to the commode for a brass candlestick—"do it with this."

Buckley stiffened. He began to understand the German's motive. But he did not grasp the full horror of what was happening until it actually happened. Drip Nyborg had sunk, crooning and wailing, to his knees. It brought back a vivid picture of him wailing and screaming in the life raft while these Nazis massacred the crew.

Another German grabbed the candlestick impatiently. This was the ugliest one of the gang, the one with the smooth skin, high cheekbones and the fat, overhanging brows. The tightness and pallor of his skin gave him the ghastly look of a corpse. He drew in his breath with a sudden hiss of disgust and fury as Drip Nyborg kneeled before him.

A third German, the Junker with the monocle-marked eye, stood straight-backed, his lips pressed in Potsdam complacency and pride. The rest of them watched with the steady, staring eyes of Germans watching the execution of a hostage who has dug his own grave.

The brass candlestick came down with a terrific crunch, splitting Drip Nyborg's skull.

Buckley staggered back, sickened. A fist swung from a man behind him—not much of a blow, but enough to knock him face forward on the bed. It was so harmless that he could not believe it.

Nor could he believe it when the Germans quietly slipped out. For they left without doing him the slightest harm, except for that one blow that had merely pushed him onto the bed. He got up slowly, groping for support to steady the swinging feeling in the pit of his stomach. Drip Nyborg was dead—the last of the ill-fated survivors of the *Kilpatric's* life raft accounted for.

"No, not the last. I'm the last," Buckley mused. "They've got to murder me." Buckley stared at the bloody thing on the floor. "And there's Porky Johnson. Maybe they didn't murder him. He jumped overboard but maybe he didn't drown. And Red Divens, who rode with the Bad Bunch in Montana and boasted how he'd cheated death a hundred times. He jumped, too . . ."

He snapped out of his daze and ran to the door. He hadn't heard any lock click when the Germans slipped out. He tried the door, opened it an inch then slammed it shut again. It occurred to him just in time that the killers were perfectly willing to let him walk out of this room. If he walked out into the hall they had an obvious excuse to kill him. It was, as they say in the Argentine, the *ley fuga*, or the law of flight.

Somewhere out there on the staircase the medico was screaming for help in a piercing soprano. "Señor Carter! *Sargento!* Up here! He came up here and ran amok!"

The others in the plot, the Germans who had slipped out, were silent. It was possible that most of them had slipped away entirely. But there would be one or two out there ready to drop Buckley with a slug, or to brain him, the moment he opened the door.

He tried another exit instead, one that led into the next room. There was a bathroom between, both of its doors unlocked, and this was all according to the plan no doubt. He could have all the exits he wanted. Their only concern was to catch him while he was attempting an escape. He was no better off in this room than in the other, he realized, as he stared at the four walls. There was the door to the same hall where the Germans were ready to ambush him. There was the window overlooking the tiled roof of the veranda. There was the door to a closet and the door to the bathroom through which he had just come. But not one of these exits led to freedom.

A crowd was gathering out in the hall. The medico was still shouting. "In here, *Sargento!* Here is the man with his skull split open. In here, Señor Carter! But the madman got away!"

Buckley could hear them trying the far door of the bathroom which he had locked. He heard them banging on it. It would be only a matter of seconds, of course, before someone guessed that the fugitive had fled through the bathroom and into the adjacent bedroom. The one who made this guess first would be, naturally enough, the one who knew the house best. It might be Carter or it might be one of the houseboys, but as Buckley heard a door open, he swung around and saw the girl standing there, white-faced.

The fat one, with the bloodless, cold eyes of a reptile that's been stepped on, held his gun pointed at Buckley's chest. If he'd had medals and a uniform he could have doubled for Goering himself.

She had entered, not from the bathroom, but from the hall, and as she came in she closed the door behind her, locked it.

BY the look in her eyes Buckley knew what she was thinking. She thought he had killed Drip Nyborg. After all, he had sworn to kill the whole crew.

Whatever was in her mind, Buckley said quickly, "Get this straight first. I didn't kill

him. It was a trap. That greasy little doctor led me straight into it. Of course you won't believe me—"

"You don't know what I believe." That was all she could say before the commotion out in the hall silenced her.

Someone pounded on the hall door. A voice shouted, "The señorita went in there just now, *senor!* She locked the door!"

Carter's voice was the loudest in the racket.

"Betty, let me in! What's happened?"

The girl was still staring at Buckley, measuring him. "Hide in that closet," she said. "And stay there till I call you out."

This seemed like a clever solution. If they found her in this room apparently alone, she could dismiss them with a simple lie: She had not seen the madman come in here; if he had, he had escaped—that was all she would need to say. And that must have been her plan, Buckley believed, as he waited in the smothering darkness of the clothes closet. He could hear the voices, muffled now, but still shouting, men running in the hall or banging on locked doors. They would be searching the whole house for him, he thought. But he was mistaken.

The hubbub subsided abruptly. He waited, his heart pounding out the seconds until the closet door opened.

After the pitch darkness he stood blinking, facing the *sargento* who held out a pair of handcuffs. Behind him stood Carter, his face rock-gray and rock-hard, the gun in his hand leveled at the prisoner. The girl stood at the hallway door and just behind her, out in the hall itself, Buckley could see the grimly satisfied faces of the Germans.

"Very well, *señor,*" the *sargento* said to Carter. "Put your gun in your pocket. I have him safe, see—his wrist linked to mine."

Carter lowered his gun, then turned to the Germans at the door. "Sorry, but I'll have to ask you all to stay out. I know how you fellows feel, of course. He murdered your shipmate, but there's to be no lynch party here."

"We shall keep him in here, *señores,* till the alcalde comes," the *sargento* said. "Let someone send for the alcalde and tell him of the murder."

Carter called to a houseboy in the hall. "You hear, Manoel? Phone the alcalde to come as soon as he can. And the rest of you," he said to his guests, "I suggest you all go downstairs and cool off if you can. Go down to the buffet. Some highballs might help." Before they could answer, Carter closed the door and locked it.

Buckley looked at the girl in a slow burning rage. "And now that you've pulled this neat little trick, what's your next play?"

She answered calmly, "I want you to tell my father and the *sargento* how that man was killed."

"Why don't *you* tell them? They'll believe you. They won't believe me any more than you do."

Without a tremor of her lips, the girl said, "The medico led this man upstairs and into that room. It was a trap. I don't think he had anything to do with the murder. I think he's innocent."

Her father gasped. The *sargento* gasped, "Has the señorita gone crazy likewise or what?"

"Crazy is right!" Carter burst out. "*Innocent*, she says!" He glared at Buckley. "Good Lord, man! What sort of lies have you been telling her? That man who was brained is the one you tried to knock down when you first saw him today after we had called him down to the parlor. Then we find him in that room with his skull bashed in. The medico saw you chase him in there."

"The medico is lying," Buckley shot back. "He's in their pay. That bunch of gangsters must have had fascist friends to help them. The medico's one of them."

"All right, that explains it!" the *sargento* snorted. "You can give that explanation to the alcalde when he comes. He has known the medico since boyhood and will be very much interested that you've included him in your list of accusations."

"And perhaps he'll be interested in something else that's to be explained," Betty Carter said. She kept her voice down so that it was little more than a whisper. "I just had a talk with one of those men—those American seamen, as they call themselves. I talked with the one who says he was a junior engineer on the *Kilpatric*. He's the one who's using the same name as this man here—Jim Buckley."

"Just what are you talking about?" Carter interrupted.

"I wanted to find out if he knew anything about machinery. I'd already discovered that this man does." She nodded to Buckley. "The other one is an impostor, a complete phony. He doesn't know the difference between a belt drive and a gear drive, and I don't think he ever heard of a turbine pump."

Her father scowled. "He doesn't know a turbine? Well, what about it? It isn't every seaman who knows—"

"Not in the deck department maybe," Buckley said, explaining the girl's argument. "But in the engineer's department they'd know. That bullet-headed Nazi says he's an engineer!"

"Yes, but," the *sargento* said, baffled, "what has all this to do with the case of the murder? I do not understand."

"You better understand in a hurry!" Buckley cried. "Those killers have an excuse now to lynch me. Mr. Carter had a good hunch about that. They'll take a potshot at me the first chance they get. And I'm telling you, Mr. Carter, I'm not the only one they'll shoot. If they catch on that your daughter suspects them, God help her and God help you!"

"BUT look, please," the *sargento* said, distracted. "A potshot you say. How can such a thing be? Why, they have no guns. We found that out when they were rescued. We do not allow firearms brought into the Argentine, not even by survivors of shipwrecks."

"Six of them stuck me up!" Buckley protested hotly. "Every one of them was armed."

"An obvious lie!" the *sargento* retorted. "They could not buy firearms in this port, and they had none when they came ashore. Yet you say they were armed."

Despite his snort, the girl nodded thoughtfully. "I remember something," she said. "Last night some of them went downtown and bought a lot of curios. We didn't think anything of it because that's what all sailors do."

Carter went on, following his daughter's line of thought. "Some native here might have supplied them with firearms, some confederate and fascist. They could have packed the guns and ammunition in those baskets of curios."

"That two-spot crook of a doctor!" Buckley broke in excitedly. "Of course they've got a confederate. I figured that out long ago." And he added, chagrined, "I even told the doctor everything I figured out."

But the *sargento* kept his head. "All this suspicion is based on the word of one man here, against eight. And on what basis—except that somebody doesn't know about pumps?"

Carter ran his fingers through his mane of gray hair. "It's pretty slim, this hunch of ours." He turned to the girl. "You told us to keep everyone out of the room before we arrested this man. I saw lynch in their eyes and felt it was a good precaution, I admit. But this proof you have about one of them being a phony—well, sailors spin yarns. And they look down on the steward's department. Maybe he *isn't* an engineer, maybe he's just a steward. But that's not enough, as the *sargento* says."

"Then I'll tell you something else," Betty Carter said. "This morning I noticed that man with the smooth skin, the ghastly looking one. It reminded me of a señora in town who's had her face lifted. I saw the marks and asked the medico if I was right. He admitted the man must have had some plastic surgery, possibly because of wounds in the war."

"An ample explanation," the *sargento* observed. "Plastic surgery— *por Dios*, why not?"

But Buckley cried, "There you are! They're war criminals! One of them may be a famous one, some arch Nazi killer who'd be known by sight. I know the one you mean—the

ghastly one. That's an accurate name for him!"

A slow, determined knock on the door startled everyone in the room. Betty Carter grabbed her father's arm as he went to open the door. He hesitated before turning the lock, then called out, "Who is it?"

"Me *señor*. Only Manoel."

Carter let the houseboy in.

"*Señor*, I have tried all this time to telephone the alcalde," the houseboy said, kneading his hands. "But first they used the telephone themselves. It is to the cab company they talked and they ordered two cabs to come, not tomorrow, but now. Then they tell me to go away and not to stand there and listen. Again after a time I try to go to the telephone and they say, 'What do you want anyway? Vamoose!' they tell me like that!"

Carter swore. "It's my phone and my house. They heard me tell you to call the alcalde."

"*Sí, señor*, but I"—the houseboy explained humbly and very conclusively—"I was afraid!"

"Afraid, hell! If they start bullying my servants I'll kick them out pronto! I'll break their necks!" Carter cooled off, trying to think. "So they wouldn't let you phone the alcalde. M'm! I'm just beginning to see a light!"

"Why wait for the alcalde?" the *sargento* asked innocently. "I will take this *hombre* in my own car." He looked down at his wrist manacled to the prisoner's. "That is, I should say, if someone will drive."

"Damn you, *Sargento*. That's just what they want!" Carter exploded. "If you take this man out in the hall, he'll be plugged. Can't you get that through your head?"

"Then let the alcalde come and prescribe what is to be done. I am an officer of the law but not the *jefe político*. I will keep the prisoner safe in this room, but not all night. Let someone else besides this frightened *mozo* of yours telephone."

"I'll get the alcalde, and a squad of constabulary besides!" Carter said, going to the door.

"I'll go with you, Dad," Betty said anxiously.

Carter looked at her then at the prisoner. He was not yet absolutely certain of the truth. Betty's case for this derelict was, as he had admitted himself, pretty slim. "All right, come on," he said. "From now on I don't want to let you out of my sight."

When they went out, the *sargento* and his prisoner sat shoulder to shoulder on the saguan settee in front of the dressing table. From here Buckley had view through the window of the driveway and lawn.

All the guests had left long since. They had left before the *sargento* first shouted his warning that the beachcomber had broken out of the warehouse and was on the loose. Hence it was possible that the town knew nothing of what was really going on in the Carter home. No one would think of reporting the incident of the crazy man to the police, for the police already had a representative on the premises, in the person of the *sargento*. Judging from the empty street, it was obvious that no exciting news had as yet reached police headquarters, or the alcalde, or the *Oficina de Migración*. The tragedy that was moving to its climax in the Carter house was known only to its inmates.

"It came faster than I thought," Buckley said aloud.

"What came faster than what?" his captor asked.

"The setup I was afraid of from the start—Carter and his daughter held prisoner in their own house by these Nazis."

"*Santa Maria del Rio de Negro!* Must I sit here and listen to you rave about nothing but Nazis without end!"

It was not raving, as the *sargento* might have admitted when Betty and her father came back. Buckley saw the look in Carter's eyes as he closed the door, and he saw the gun butt protruding from the side pocket of his jacket. Since going downstairs to the phone they must have had a chance to get an extra gun, for the girl held one in her own hand.

"Now what is this, *señor!*" the *sargento* asked. "This thing of the guns! The constabulary will have guns enough if there is need."

"I don't think the constabulary will get here in time, nor the alcalde either," Carter said, locking the door. "I can't phone for help. The wires are cut."

"NOW who could have cut the wires?" the baffled *sargento* asked.

"You have seven guesses," Jim Buckley said.

Carter also gave an answer. "Since you can't figure it out for yourself, *Sargento*, I'll tell you. I have two houseboys and a cook who've locked themselves up in the servants' hut across the yard. They didn't cut any wires. This prisoner didn't do it, because someone phoned the cab company while he was in this room. The wires were cut since then. That leaves my guests, seven of them—not counting the dead one."

"*Diablo!* You mean one of your guests did it! A fine way to repay your hospitality, *señor!* But why would they do such a thing?"

Carter groaned, so did Buckley. The girl said to the *sargento* as if speaking to a dull-witted child, "They did it so we can't call for help. They did it because they want to kill this man. They did it because they want to get out of town before they're caught in their own trap!"

"Caught? What are they to be caught for?"

"Unlock those cuffs, *Sargento!*" Carter said, as his wits' end. "We can't pound the truth in your head."

The *sargento* got out his key, but put it back. "No, *por Dios!* He is my prisoner. I must have

some proof of all the señorita is saying. They want to kill this man, she says. They want to get out of town, she says. And no proof except pumps."

Carter said, as he heard footsteps in the hall, "The proof has come too late, *Sargento!*" His lanky form stiffened at the steady knock. "Who is it?" he called, his fingers creeping around the gun butt in his pocket.

"It's just me, Mr. Carter. Kimbrough." This was the voice of the round-headed German who spoke the best English of the gang. "I'd like a word with you if you don't mind."

Carter motioned his daughter to a safe corner of the room. "You, too, *Sargento,*" he said in a low voice. "Take your prisoner over there." He opened the door just enough so that his tall figure completely blocked the way. "All right, what do you want?"

"We've talked this over, Mr. Carter. This shocking tragedy that's happened in your house," the German began smoothly. "We're completely baffled. A mystery from any angle we look at it. No motive. No clue as to who this crazed man is. We all agree to that, don't we, Mr. Carter, sir?"

Carter gave no answer, not even a nod of his head. The German went on, "A mystery except for one little ray of light. You remember when the beachcomber first saw his victim—that was downstairs in the parlor—he went to him with open arms as if he knew him?"

This time Carter answered. "I remember that. What of it?"

"We don't know what of it, but we are going to find out. They may have known each other some time in their past. If we could settle that one point, it may clear up the whole mystery once and for all."

"And how do you think you'll clear it up?"

"Why, simply enough, Mr. Carter," the German wheedled. "We want to talk to the murderer ourselves."

"I thought so!" Carter said with a long-lipped grin. "Well you better try some other way of getting him out of this room. If you have any theory about his knowing the murdered man then you can offer it at the trial."

Buckley could almost hear the German's heavy breathing before he announced tensely, "The trial is right now, Mr. Carter. Our shipmate was brutally murdered and we feel justified in taking certain steps—"

"You mean like cutting telephone wires," Carter said pointedly.

Again the German took an audible breath. "I will be frank with you, sir. Yes, one of us cut the wires—a hasty act which displeased the rest of us. But the one who did it was a special chum of the murdered man. He wanted to settle the score with his own hands—and justly. What with these Argentine politics, the murderer might get away. What do we know about this alcalde's ideas of justice? So, the wires were cut. We are going to have justice!"

"There is something to be said for the señor's view," the *sargento* commented. "The murder was revolting, and their own shipmate was the victim. Can you blame them for their view of the matter?"

"You are a fine one to agree to a lynch party, *Sargento!*" the girl cried.

The *sargento's* attitude of appeasement had a definite effect on the German. He assumed a more bullying tone. "I will remind you, Mr. Carter, that you have nothing to do with this case one way or the other. You are no more an officer of the law than I am. The murdered man was our dear friend. He suffered with us. We loved him. And you lock yourself up in here with the murderer. Why? It is we who should lock ourselves up with him. In fact, we demand that you turn him over to us for our own trial—and enough of this talking!"

"I'm not talking any more," Carter said, his right arm tensing. He shifted his weight slightly so that the gun in his coat pocket could bear on the German's huge stomach. But he must have thought of the consequences of calling this showdown himself. Instead of squeezing the trigger, he said, "If you come to this door again and ask me to turn over the prisoner to be shot, I'll put a slug in your own guts for the answer. Go back and tell your gang that." He slammed the door shut.

OUT in the hall, the German choked with rage, shouting, "You will regret this attitude, Mr. Carter, you and your daughter both!"

The *sargento* called back in a high-pitched voice, "Please, Señor Kimbrough! If you will let me talk to Señor Carter I will give him some good advice."

As the German's footsteps—the heavy plodding step of a fat man—receded down the hall, Carter whirled on the *sargento.*

"Unlock those cuffs!"

"Gladly, *señor.* I am not going to be chained to a man whom the gods have touched." He snapped the cuffs open. "I free not him, but myself. My only regret is that you, Señor Carter, and your daughter, are risking your lives in the defense of this desperado."

Jim Buckley stood up rubbing his wrist. "The *sargento* is right. If they attack this room, you can't fight them off, Mr. Carter." He nodded to the girl. "She'd be in the thick of it. I'm not asking you to fight for me. I'm just asking you to let me fight them myself. If I had a gun—"

"*Madre de Dios!* Don't give him a gun!" the *sargento* cried. "Please to wait, Señor Carter. I will talk to these lynch *americanos,* and gain time. I shall tell them to consider what will happen if any harm comes to you or to the señorita."

"If you can send for help somehow—" Carter said uncertainly.

"*Sí, sí,* I shall manage to get news to the alcalde by one means or another. But please, Señor Carter, do not precipitate a fight. Give me time and I will do what I can."

When he went out, Carter locked the door and stood listening. Buckley and the girl stood at the window. Two Germans were standing below, obviously on guard. They kept their eyes fixed on the window and the potted plants which screened Buckley and the girl from view. The room was getting darker because of the sunset, but out in the garden the low rays of light spotted the Germans clearly. "I could pick them both off easily enough," Buckley said, "if only I had a gun."

The girl turned to her father to see what answer he would give to this. Carter shook his head.

The *sargento* came back apparently before he had had any chance to offer the Germans his advice. He knocked excitedly, then called before the door was opened. "*Señor!* Señor Carter! They say they will give just five minutes for you and the señorita to get out of the way, else they will break in! It is a lynch party they talk of, these *norteamericanos!*"

"Tell them to go straight to—" Carter faltered. Opening the door slightly, he asked, "Did you send someone for help?"

"No *señor.* Manoel did not answer when I called out to the yard. It is my belief the servants have fled. I plead with you, *señor!* Do not stay in this room. Do what these desperate men demand."

This time Carter finished his sentence. "Tell them to go to hell!" He locked the door, turned to Buckley. "Take it easy now. They're bluffing. They won't come near here with my daughter in the room. If they so much as dare—"

"That's just it, Mr. Carter. I'm not going to hide behind her skirts. I'm leaving."

"How? Talk sense, man!"

"I can drop down from this window easily. If I had a gun I could shoot my way out." He went on eagerly. "I could get to that bullock cart over there at the gate. In those bales of wool I'd be safe as a bug in a rug. I could knock off the rest of 'em if they tried to get me. At least your daughter wouldn't be in any danger."

That was the deciding point. Carter crossed to the window and stood looking across Betty's shoulder toward the driveway. "You could get to the cart easily enough if I—if I picked off those two rats on the driveway." His hand was on his daughter's shoulder as he spoke. "Don't be so tense, Betty. Relax. You won't have to do any shooting."

"In that case," Betty said, "I won't need this gun." She turned to Buckley. "Here, you take it."

Buckley put out his hand, but hesitated, glancing at her father for confirmation of this deal.

Carter's answer was to take the box of cartridges from his pocket. "You may need these, too."

CHAPTER VI

LAW OF THE MARIAS

SOME Argentine sheep farmer, it seemed, wanted to buy a pump. That was the only reason, so far as Alf Carter or his daughter could guess, that the ox wagon drove in through the gate.

The Germans yelled at the driver, who plodded along by the near ox of the lead team. But the old *mozo* did not understand English.

Although the hide-topped cart with its horse-high wheels was no different from many others on the Chical-có road, Buckley recognized it. And he recognized the *mozo* driving the oxen. Next he recognized the man sitting in the cart itself behind the wheel team—a chunky-muscled man in baggy trousers, broad belt, flat black hat.

It was this picturesque giant, the gaucho, who answered the yells of the Germans. "Ho, that's a good way to yell, *por Dios!* Who are you to tell me to get out! And if you lift that gun, my three Marias will tear off your arm like the arm of a cockroach!"

Two taxicabs had turned into the gate behind the ox cart and now they honked their horns impatiently. This merely resulted in the oxen stopping altogether, blocking the driveway. Meanwhile some more Germans had come out on the veranda. Buckley could not see them but he saw the *sargento* who came out at the same time, running down from the veranda to the driveway.

The *sargento* took one look at the wagon, its driver and the gaucho, then exclaimed, "Now here is an extraordinary thing, *señores!* This is the very wagon that first brought the crazy man to the police station!"

"Tell them to get out of here!" a German shouted. "They're blocking those hacks!"

"It is easier for hacks to turn than for three teams of oxen," the gaucho retorted. "Nor will I waste time talking of traffic problems, *Sargento.* I am here not to talk, but to act!" He spun his Marias with a murderous whir. "Where is the crazy *norteamericano?*"

Buckley listened tensely. And the Germans seemed disposed to listen likewise, one of them saying, "We will tell you where he is if you tell us what you want of him."

"I want blood payment of him, that is what I want!" the gaucho roared. "The Indio he stoned is a kinsman of mine. The stone wound, so we thought, was only a bruise but we thought too fast. The Indio is dead."

"Now here is a circumstance!" the *sargento* said gloomily. "But this that you call blood payment is murder, Pablo. You cannot do such a thing. Besides these señores will not allow it."

"What have they to do with it?"

"They want to kill the madman themselves. That is what they have to do with it."

"No, *diablo!* It is I who have the first claim to vengeance!" the gaucho yelled. "Where is the *hombre?*"

One of the Germans pointed to the window where three faces peered through the hanging baskets of ferns. "He is up there in that room. But Old Man Carter won't let anyone near."

"I will talk to the Señor Carter," the gaucho said with murderous calm.

"Wait a minute, you!" one of the Germans interrupted. "How are you going to get your blood payment, as you call it?"

The whistling whir of the three Marias was a sufficient answer.

The Germans looked at each other, grinning. One of them said, "But we're telling you, Carter won't let you into that room. He's got a gun, you've only got a whip."

"A whip—and my tongue to talk with," the gaucho said confidently. "Señor Carter will not use his gun against a gaucho lest every man in the pampa who buys his pumps turn into an enemy instead of a customer."

Again the Germans looked at each other. Some of them were hidden by the veranda roof directly beneath the window, but Buckley could see the others. He saw the fat Goering smile on one, the shoulders of another heaving in a chuckling laugh, the nudging elbow of a third. One guffawed. They did not have to say what they were thinking. The whole situation was as clear as if they thought aloud: *Let this gaucho have his revenge. Why cheat him of it?*

If he succeeded, then the Germans could pack up and escape without leaving any further suspicion of murder behind them. There were the two cabs ready and waiting. There were nods and grins.

One of the Germans said jovially, "Well, well, friend Pablo, if that is your name. We will give you a chance anyway. But you must be quick about it. Three or four of us will watch that window to see that he does not jump out, and the rest will go upstairs with you. If Old Man Carter doesn't let you in, we will help you break down the door."

"Señor Carter will let me in without your help," the gaucho snorted. "He will have to listen to my case, which is a just one. A few minutes' palaver is all I'll need and then, the revenge which is sweet!"

"We will wait a few minutes, but not longer."

The *sargento* stepped in front of the gaucho as he turned toward the veranda. "I will not wait, Pablo! I am an officer of the law and you expect me to stand by and wait! Pablo, you are drunk! And you are under arrest."

The Germans began to growl. One of them circled behind the *sargento,* leaped on him and pinioned his arms.

Peering over the window sill, Carter, his daughter and Buckley had watched the scene impassively until this moment. But now Buckley lifted his gun.

"Not yet!" Carter said, grabbing his arm.

"Hell, I could put a slug through that rat's head and down his neck! Can't you see what they're doing?"

"Of course I can see. They're taking the *sargento's* gun from him. What of it? He's no use to us, you ought to know by this time."

The gaucho, no longer impeded, swaggered to the veranda and into the house.

Carter was right. In the driveway below, the *sargento* was in the throes of a Latin-American tantrum.

"You will all hang for this," he yelled, "you *norteamericanos,* and that drunk gaucho, too! And if you don't hang you can all murder each other! *Caramba!* I don't care which murders which! I withdraw!"

Adjusting his jacket and buckling the flap of his empty holster, the *sargento* stalked off, got into his car. In his rage he stamped on the starter, flooded the engine, stamped again. The headlights, dimming from the draining battery, reminded Buckley that night was coming fast.

And he was also reminded, when the *sargento* finally got started and drove away, that the Carter household had severed its last ties with the law.

He thought of this when the "drunk" gaucho came swashbuckling along the hallway and knocked at the door.

IT was a timid knock. And the voice was a surprising contrast to the gaucho's bombast out in the driveway.

"Oh, *señor!* Oh, Señor Carter!"

Carter switched on the lights in the room and his eyes narrowed. Before opening the door, he called, "Just what the devil are you up to, Pablo?"

The answer was given in Spanish and in the middle of it Carter and the girl both gasped.

"This *is* something!" Carter gave an astonished glance at Buckley, then unlocked the door. "He said that Indio you stoned didn't die at all. He's not his kinsman anyway. And he said something else that'll surprise you."

Pablo the gaucho gave his three-pronged whip a loud crack before he entered, but then he entered like a lamb. Closing the door behind him, he wrapped the whip about his chunky stomach, wiped his sweating pumpkin face and breathed, "*Amigos!*"

"Tell *him* the rest of it," Carter said, nodding to Buckley.

"*Sí, sí,* but I must speak in haste for those German dogs are at the end of the hall. They

think I am palavering with you to let me kill the crazy man, but if I talk too long—"

Exasperated, Carter gave the news himself. "They found two men on the beach, two castaways whose story checks with yours!"

"Two? Which ones?" Buckley cried.

"One who is badly wounded." Pablo took up the story. "He was wounded in his stomach which hung in folds like a bag because once maybe he was fat."

"You mean Porky!" Buckley almost whooped.

"*Si, señor,* that was his name. And the other one had doctored him after a fashion but he, too, was wounded—up here in the cheek. A fierce-looking *hombre,* a desperado if ever I saw one, with hair the color of a parrot's wing, a red parrot."

"Red Divens, the hell-spittin' horse thief! You mean he's alive!"

"More dead than alive, *señor.* And starved and drowned as well as wounded. But we fed them and told them about these German dogs. And the one called Red recovered miraculously. 'Take me to them!' he said. 'Don't tell them who I am, just take me to them—that's all I ask!' "

"You mean you brought them here!' the girl cried, catching Buckley's jubilation.

"In the ox cart, *señorita,* hidden amongst the wool."

Buckley wanted to leap from the window to the veranda roof below but he stopped, shook himself awake from the delightful dream. "You say Porky is badly wounded, but Red—can he hold a gun?"

"How do I know? He has no gun, else he would not stay in that ox cart hidden amongst wool. I told them to wait until a time came that was ripe."

"The time's ripe now!" Buckley cried. "Those were Red's last words, his prayer. *'Put a gun in my hand!'* that's what he prayed. And when he gets one you'll see something!"

"*Bueno,* I will smuggle one to him," the gaucho said. Then, turning to Carter, "If you can provide one, *señor?"*

"I have a rifle downstairs," Carter said. "But you can't smuggle that out to the cart. And this automatic"—he glanced at his daughter—"I might need it."

They all looked at Buckley who shook his head. "I'll need this gun to get to that wagon." He ran to the window. "But then I'll give Red his turn at it!"

He said this as the Germans showed their first sign of impatience. Footsteps sounded out in the hall, approaching the door from both sides.

"*Por Dios!"* the gaucho said under his breath. "I forgot! I must kill you, *señor!"*

He turned from a lamb into the vengeful gaucho with such suddenness that Buckley staggered back, startled. Carter and his daughter circled out of the way to a corner of the room as Pablo unwrapped his three Marias. Betty gave a half muffled scream, then realizing this was an act, she played her part by screaming aloud.

The gaucho spun his whip in a humming crescendo, brought the lead weights banging viciously against the door. Kicking over a table, he rushed to the window and spun the whip again so that the whir and wail of the Marias could reach the ears of those Germans on watch below. He topped his act with a flourish which, except for his Latin fervor, might have seemed faked. He stood at the window and shouted like Mussolini on a balcony.

"The deed is done, *señores!* Come up and see! Then hang his carcass by the heels!"

Spurious or not, the speech had its effect. The Germans had intended, of course, to come up and see for themselves. Buckley heard them running on the veranda below and saw two of them running in from the driveway. "This is going to be perfect," he said, slipping over the window sill and letting himself down to the veranda roof.

In the growing dark his rags were the same color as the whitewasned wall and this helped for a moment. The drivers of the two taxicabs waiting near the gate failed to see him at first. Crawling along the tiles toward the side of the house, he reached a trellis of vines. This screened him completely as he let himself down, hung at arm's length and dropped the rest of the distance to the ground.

It was when he made his break across the grass plot that three men saw him—the two taximen whose hacks were parked directly behind the ox wagon, and the driver of the wagon itself.

The latter knew well enough who Buckley was, for he had seen him before. But he also knew that there was going to be a shoot-out, with his wagon the concentric point of the gunfire. He dropped the cup of maté he had been drinking and fled. He fled through the gate and down the road. Like the *sargento,* he was through with these *norteamericanos!*

One of the taximen was of the same mind. Starting his hack, he backed out of the gate, crossed the road and parked there, his engine still running. The other taximan jumped out and ran for the veranda. He ran inconspicuously, refraining from raising a shout until he had crossed the veranda and was safely inside the door.

By this time Buckley had swung up into the pitch-dark wagon and was scrambling over piles of wool.

"Red! You hell-spittin' lizard, where are you?"

"Jim!"

They crawled to each other's arms. "Where's Porky?"

"Up front yonder, drinking."

From a smother of wool, Porky sighed, "Jim!"

Buckley crawled to him. Although it was pitch-dark he could see Porky's ears by the sense of touch as he reached. And he could see his nose—the blob of shapeless flesh which was the only fat left on him!

"Where we going from here, Jim?"

"Nowhere. The shoot-out's coming right here, in maybe two minutes."

"We ought to have a smile on that." Porky felt for Jim's hand and stuck a flask in it. Jim drank. "Here, Red. Have a smile." He reached out in the dark as if to hand Red the flask.

But instead of the flask Montana Red felt a gun thrust into his hand.

PABLO, the bolo-swinging gaucho, was the first to run downstairs and flee the house. Then came Carter and his daughter. It was obvious that all three had escaped from the upstairs room before the Germans had come in. It would have been awkward had they stayed there to explain how the prisoner escaped. The prisoner was supposed to be dead, beaten to death by the gaucho's three Marias. The gaucho himself had made the announcement.

Running down the driveway, Pablo headed for the wagon and past the three teams of oxen. He kept going, but as he passed the back of the wagon he called softly to the three men inside, "Go with God, *amigos!*"

With that fervent *adiós,* Pablo the gaucho kept running and, like the *sargento* and the wagon *mozo,* he made his exit from the Carter home.

Carter and his daughter were running toward the warehouse when the Germans clattered down the stairs and out on the veranda. It looked as if they were chasing Carter and the girl but this was a secondary issue. They headed straight for the ox wagon; the taximan who had gone in to shout the alarm, must have told them exactly what had happened.

The taximan, a scrawny little *crillo,* stood on the veranda now at a safe distance but one of the Germans yelled at him. "The man you saw climbing into the wagon, did he have a gun?"

"I could not see, *'ñor,"* the taximan called back. "I only saw him when he ran across this lawn. Who would give him a gun anyway? Is he not a madman?"

But the Germans took no chances. Instead of rushing the wagon, they divided into two groups, one circling to the back of the wagon, the other group deploying behind the oxen which served as a partial protection. They started their crossfire at the same moment, hurling their shots into both ends of the hide-topped cart at the same time. There was no doubt that they were well-armed. Light streaked the dusk, spurting from all seven men. Slugs poured a blasting fusillade into the wagon from both sides as well as from front and back, boring into bales of wool.

At the first volley, the oxen stampeded. The wagon jolted and banged down the driveway a short distance—scarcely more than its own length—when two of the buckjumping bullocks tumbled with slugs under their shoulderblades. The rest lurched, kicking in a tangle of harness, the wagon banging up against the heap.

Although the wagon stopped, it kept rocking as the oxen kicked and bawled. The three men inside were thrown together with a jolt, clinging to each other.

Porky and Red and Jim Buckley were in their raft again clutching desperately, rocking in the trough of the waves with the wind shrieking over their heads. But the shriek was the roar of Lugers and the whine of lead tearing through the tough hide of the wagon, hissing into wool.

In the dark, Red Divens squirmed from under a bale that had knocked him over. He started swearing but his breath was knocked out of him.

"Red! Where are you?" Buckley called anxiously.

Red's voice came from the end of the wagon where he had been thrown. "I had three of 'em picked out and then these damned cows bolted. But I'm all set now. Here comes one of 'em behind that taxi—"

But he flattened to his stomach behind a bale before he had a chance to fire. Buckley saw this clearly, for one of the Germans had jumped into the cab and turned on the headlights. The glare focused like a spotlight on the wagon and its bales of wool, turning the pitch darkness under the hide top to the brightness of day.

For the first time Buckley saw the faces of his two pards. Porky, in the center of the wagon, was slumped against a bale, his face drawn and fleshless but marked by an ear-to-ear grin. Red, at the other end of the wagon, looked absurdly small in comparison. His wounded cheek was wrapped with a bandana from chin to crown so that he looked like a little boy with the mumps. But his eyes danced with excitement, his salt-burned nose as red as the lock of hair hanging down his forehead. "So they think that light's going to help 'em!" he laughed. "They can't see anything but sheep's wool! And I can see everything! Have a smile, Porky! And you, too, Jim. This is going to be sweet!"

Porky passed Buckley the flask. But the latter's hand stiffened before he swigged. All three heard one of the Germans yell, "Drop that gun, Carter!"

The voice was on one side of the wagon, the hide top screening the scene completely from range and view.

"Cut a hole in that hide, Jim!" Red said calmly, "and we'll see what we can see." He tossed Jim a knife.

The firing kept up but only from one group. The rest of the gangsters were obviously distracted by this secondary problem—the problem of Carter and his daughter.

Buckley ripped at the tough hide, enlarging a tear already started by a bullet. Through it he had a good view of the warehouse wall. The cab's headlights had caught Carter standing there, the glare revealing him in the act of raising his gun. Three Germans covered him, one on each side, one directly in front of him. Carter might have squeezed off a shot but his daughter had run out of the warehouse door and was standing at his side. Wisely, he obeyed their order to drop his gun and raise his hands.

"A fine host you are, Carter!" the round-headed German snarled. "We are innocent men and you suspect us—on the word of a madman. You and your daughter both believe that swine and his insane yarns about a U-boat. We should give your house a blood bath for what you are thinking about us!"

Red said from his end of the wagon, "unpleasant gent, isn't he? Can you see him, Jim?"

Jim's answer was clear. "Give me that gun for just one shot, Red."

"How far away are they?"

"Close enough so I can hear 'em talk. I couldn't miss."

"O. K. But don't forget, I want my turn."

Still flattened on his stomach, Red squirmed sideways and handed the gun over a bale.

The German was shrieking now. "You suspect us when we are innocent! We are innocent, I tell you!" He shrieked like all Germans shrieking to the world. "We have committed no crimes and yet you help a madman who is believed by no one in this town—except you! And *you,*" he yelled at the girl.

Then he turned to his two companions standing on either side of Carter. Obviously they were all carrying out their hoax to the last ditch, for they did not forget to speak English. "The woman is as bad as he is!" he yelled, pointing. "She started all these unjust suspicions!"

"Those questions you asked me about pumps," another snarled—the long-necked, bullet-headed thug who posed as an engineer—"don't think you were fooling me. You suspected I was not a ship's engineer. You took that swine's word against mine! It is time we put a stop to these suspicions!"

"But we will not harm you," the round-head interrupted. "We will take your father as hostage. You will tell everyone that he went to the Bahia airport with us to see us on our way. That will sound reasonable enough. But if you breathe a word of your suspicions to anyone in this town—you know perhaps what happens to a hostage who . . ."

The speech, a typical statement of Nazi boasting, was never finished. A slug hit him in the teeth boring through the round skull and spattering on the whitewashed wall behind. The German slumped heavily, sitting backed against the adobe, his face set in a bloody grin.

The "junior engineer" whirled, his long neck wobbling as two shots cut through it. He was like a decapitated hen for, as he sank, his gun hand kept jerking by reflex action, the shots kicking up the gravel of the driveway.

The third German fled out of range, heading for the taxicab so that Buckley lost sight of him. But Red could see him clearly bumping into two more Germans who had scrambled for the same refuge.

"Pass the gun, Jim. Three of 'em, not thirty yards away. Hell, one of 'em got in!"

Jim passed the gun and box of cartridges.

Montana Red was home again! He was in the Badlands cutting down the hired gunmen of the cow outfits who kept his sheep from water. He was back on his own ground, fighting as his forebears had fought wolves or Sioux. In that *carretada* of wool the smell of sheep was thick in his nostrils; he was in a spot to which he was born and bred.

As he started shooting, he could hear Jim Buckley laughing exultantly, "Your prayer is answered, Red!"

THE glare of the taxicab's headlights in the wagon's interior, hitting Red square in the eyes, stopped him for only a moment. His first four shots came in rhythmic succession making one prolonged roar. Two of them smashed out the lights, the next tore through the skull of the German on the runningboard, the fourth cracked the spine of the one who was halfway in the car.

Red took time out to reload. Then he waited a bit. He had to wait to get his sight before the dashboard light revealed the man in the driver's seat. This was the German who had climbed in first. Red knew he was there for the starter was growling. It kept on growling, pressed down by the weight of the driver as he slumped from the shot through the windshield.

Buckley saw it all, although he was some distance behind Red's shoulder. What he saw was like an after image, a phenomenon of vision revealing his own shipmates clutching their hearts, tumbling into the well of the life raft, squirming in their last throes. It was a repetition to the last detail of cold-blooded massacre. And as it turned out, it was a repetition even to the exact number—seven helpless men elected for the slaughter.

"Five accounted for," Buckley said. "And here's two more up at this end, Red! Pass the gun."

An arc over the warehouse door, switched on by Carter or his daughter, shed a sudden radiance over the whole lawn. But inside the wagon it was dark again. Red had to scramble back over the bales to hand the gun to Buckley. And by this time one of the Germans had flattened behind a dead ox. The other, as Red could see, was scurrying off for the corner of the warehouse.

"Sorry, Jim, but I've got to top off that one before he gets too far."

It was a long shot with two oxen in the way. To Red's chagrin he had to fire twice, for the German, even with a slug in his back, kept running.

At the second shot he stumbled, curled up, still kicking.

"Not so good," Red admitted. "But let him kick a while."

From his nest of wool in the middle of the wagon, Porky called out, "What's the score?"

"Five dead and one kicking," Buckley said. "And there's the seventh hiding behind that cow. Give me the gun, Red. It's the guy who clicks his heels when he bows. He's a Junker. Wore a monocle once."

"But there's a cow in front of him. How you going to shoot through a cow?"

Buckley had to study this point. Two of the oxen were dead, one was still lying on its side exhausted from struggling, its hind legs completely snagged; the rest had scrambled to their feet, but stood in a tangle of harness.

"I can see one of his boots, Red. Give me the gun and I'll make him click his heels."

Light streaked from behind the back of the dead ox at the very moment Red gave up the gun. Buckley felt his ear burn. The Junker fired again, lead slicing upwards at an angle through Buckley's hair, then whistling through the hide roof. He fired back, aiming at the blast of light.

"Maybe that stopped him," Red said and added, "Maybe it didn't. He's squirming. Let me finish him, Jim."

"Let *me* finish him!" Porky said.

The gun was passed to Red then to Porky as if they were passing the flask around again. Porky sat back heavily against a bale, but in that position he had a good view through the front of the wagon and across the dead ox. The Junker was on his hands and knees unable to get up. Porky lifted his arm weakly, aimed as if with a rifle, his huge nose twitching as he tried to get a sight. The recoil as he fired, kicked the gun from his hand.

"B'God you got him!" Buckley cheered, although he could see the Junker was still crawling. He struck a match, found the gun, threw a last shot. "Just for luck," he explained to Porky.

The Junker rolled over.

It was not long before the Carter compound was crowded. A muleteer with a cargo of hides heard the gunfire, turned and ran to the gate to watch. A vendor of tamales followed. Some Portuguese from a cantina down the road left their wine and came running. The gaucho and the old driver of the ox cart came with them. And so did the *sargento*.

The *sargento* had stopped at that same cantina to telephone to headquarters, and in doing so, had run into the little medico, Dr. Alvarez. It seemed that the doctor, like the *sargento* and others, had decided to let these *norteamericanos* fight their own fight. When the *sargento* offered to give him a lift into town, the doctor had accepted gladly. But it was right at that moment that they had heard the gun battle in the Carter compound.

When the *sargento* turned his car to head for the gate, the medico had objected.

"Why do you object?" the *sargento* had asked in astonishment. "You will be called eventually anyway. If someone is wounded you will be sent for, as the medico. If some more of them are murdered you will similarly be sent for, as the autopsy surgeon. So you must come with me."

The doctor had consented, fearing to arouse suspicion by jumping out of the car. Besides he had no idea of the outcome of the fight. It was seven cool-headed Nazi killers against one American—that was the definite picture in the medico's mind. And there could be but one definite outcome. But he had guessed wrong, he realized, as they drove in through the gate.

THE warehouse arc-light shed a radiance over the sprawled bodies of oxen and men. A small group near the hide-covered cart stood around two tattered, unshaven scarecrows. Although Dr. Alvarez knew one of them, he had no doubt whatever that both were the real castaways from the life raft of the *Kilpatric*.

Jim Buckley did not look at the approaching car, for his head was tilted stiffly while Betty Carter bandaged his cut ear. It was Betty's father who saw the medico cringing beside the *sargento* in the driver's seat.

"So you thought you'd look things over, did you, Doc?" Carter said grimly. "You told us one lie, about that crook upstairs with his skull cracked open. It was you who led Buckley into that trap!"

"No, no, Señor Carter, please, if it conforms—" The medico was trying to slip out of the other side of the car when Red Divens put a slug through his Panama.

"Walk around and join the party, hoppergrass," Red said, laughing.

The medico broke down. "Please, *señor*, don't kill me! I'll tell everything!" He tried to babble it all at once. "They paid me—it was a big sum! They have great wealth deposited in Buenos Aires. An incredible sum they offered me! That one with the round head, he was a capitalist and a *standarten fuehrer* in the people's army. And that one lying by the dead ox was a rich Junker and a luftwaffe lieutenant. They were all rich and had fortunes transferred to our banks. They promised me more money than I ever dreamed of. That is why I—"

"That's why you thought you'd help them live in luxury in the Argentine the rest of their lives," Carter said tartly.

"No, no, Señor Carter! I agreed to no such thing. They already had their arrangements with a fascist, a Porteño, who was to lead them to their refuge in the Cordillera. This señor"—he bowed toward Buckley, fawned and tried to smile—"this young señor thought it all out very clearly. He was not a madman at all!"

Buckley turned his back and said to Red, "Come on, let's get Porky out of that wagon."

The little medico still rattled on. "No, he was not the crazy one. It is I, Dr. Alvarez, who am crazy. To think that I should traffic with those Nazis—"

"You were a Nazi yourself till they lost the war!" Carter snapped. "And you're still a fascist through and through. Take him, *Sargento*. I'll listen to the rest of it at the *caliboza*."

"*Si, si,* Señor Carter, I will tell everything I know!" Even while the *sargento* snapped on the cuffs and led him to the car, the doctor kept babbling. "I will help the authorities and answer every question frankly. I will tell you before you ask. That one with the operation scars on his nose—you didn't see the scars? No, but I will tell of the facial surgery performed in Hamburg—"

"Tell us who he is and have done with it!" the *sargento* interrupted.

"I did not know until I read the name in *El Mundo*. If I had known I would not have bargained with a man the stench of whose deeds will follow him to the end of time! He was the commandant of a prison camp, a place of such horror as this world has never seen! And the one with the long neck and that one lying over there are doctors who used the prisoners of Buchenwald and Dachau for vivisection. The Federal police will be glad to know of what I have to tell!"

The *sargento* said triumphantly, "We have caught a big fish in this net, Señor Carter. We've been watching for them. Your reward will be a big one. I happen to know that their enormous fortune has already been frozen and a fair part will go to the one who captures them."

"The reward goes to those gun-shooting rannies in that wagon," Carter said.

The three rannies were passing a flask back and forth, as they had previously passed the gun. They waited in the wagon, drinking, while the bodies of the Germans were being dumped like sacks in the back of the *sargento's* car.

They took up the exhilarated talk where they had left off. "I'll buy me a sheep ranch!" Red laughed. "Did you hear what that gent said out there? We get a reward. We caught some big fish in the net. I'll settle down and run sheep because it's just like Montana."

"Me, I'll buy a farm," Porky said, "way inland where there's alfalfa and no salt!"

Jim Buckley said, "I've been thinking. Maybe instead of lumber . . . There's a big market in this flat country for pumps—"

A voice suddenly spoke up. "My daughter said you know a lot about pumps. In a week or two I'll tell you where you can get a good job, but we're going to fatten you up first."

Buckley was staring at a picture framed by the hoop of the wagon's roof. Pablo the gaucho stood in the background against a window of the warehouse, its crated machinery brilliantly lighted inside. It was a flash of the old and the new Argentine that Buckley saw, with an American girl standing in the foreground, her eyes shining and fixed on him. It was a picture he wanted to cling to. He wanted to step into it and live in it for many years to come.

ALEX McDOUGALL'S PIG

By
R. A. EMBERG

ILLUSTRATED BY CLIFFORD C. TOWNLEY

A Fact Story

The old sailor looked at the squat, tubular craft. "I ain't shippin' on no damn pig kid! And if you take my advice you won't either."

Now come all you freshwater sailormen,
Whatever your draft or rig,
I'll sing you a song of a cockeyed ship,
Of Alex McDougall's Pig.

THE old sailor and I, a youngster of seventeen, rounded the corner of the pier. Ahead, a squat tubular craft with a top-heavy superstructure was moored to the dock with thin steel hawsers.

The old sailor looked at the slip of paper the shipping commissioner at the foot of Duluth's Fifth Avenue West had given him. He wrinkled his nose. "Here, kid," he said, "lemme see yours."

I gave him my slip, a duplicate of the one he had except for our names. Then he exploded. "That blankety-blank so-and-so! I ain't shippin' on no damned pig, kid! And if you take my advice you won't either. Them pigs ain't ships; they roll over and never come up. They're mantraps, death boats, that's what!"

If an old sailor wouldn't ship on a pig, neither would I. To hell with it. That commissioner should have told us that the *Pathfinder* was a pig. Shipping was good; sailors were scarce. So we went back to the shipping hall to argue.

CAPTAIN Alexander McDougall, father of the pig, the oddest craft ever designed, from which the submarine derived its opprobious nickname, pig-boat, was born in Port Ellen, Scotland, March 16, 1845, into the Clan Aindreas. In 1854 the family came to Canada and settled at Collingwood, Ontario. In 1861 young McDougall shipped as a sailor on the Great Lakes which in those days were navigated more by rule of thumb than anything else. Within ten years Alex was a full-fledged skipper, commanding the *Thomas A. Scott,* a medium-sized steamer in the Chicago-Buffalo trade.

In 1871 he was given command of the Anchor Line's new *Japan,* just off the stocks in a Buffalo shipyard, the largest and finest steamer so

far launched on the Great Lakes. At this time McDougall was just twenty-six years old.

In the years to follow he became an American citizen and established a home at Duluth, Minnesota, which was fast becoming a shipping center of importance. For the next decade or until 1888 he commanded various ships on the lakes.

In those days about half the entire vessel tonnage on the Great Lakes was sail, but steam was beginning to draw ahead. However, steamers were costly to build and maintain, and the hazards of lake navigation were many. Altogether too many steamers foundered in the terrific lake storms, and in his many years sailing McDougall had been thinking of a new type of ship. He may have been influenced by the so-called turret ships which were then being turned out in British yards, or he may simply have had a canny Scotch intuition; in any event he tried his hand at designing.

The caravels of Columbus were constructed on the principle that safety of both ship and crew lay in the height of poop and forecastle above water, with a somewhat lower midship section that flared down from bow and stern. McDougall thought along opposite lines, believing that safety lay nearer the surface of the water—even under it.

At any rate, for a long time, probably ten years, McDougall experimented, and regardless of the old myth about Scotch miserliness, was liberal with whatever money he could get to spend on his experiments. In fact, he kept himself broke most of the time paying for the models and water-tanks with which his home was cluttered.

Slowly the ultimate design took form, a concave-decked vessel hermetically sealed, cylindrically structured with conoidal bow and stern tapering upward from the keel. In other words, just about what modern streamlining has done for the automobile.

Alex experienced all the things that most inventors encounter—ridicule, scorn, laughter.

"She'll roll over," was the raucous comment of the first ship-owner he showed the model to. "She's round and she has no bulwarks. You call that damned thing a boat—why it looks more like a pig!"

This reception was typical. Alex made the rounds up and down the freshwater seas—calling on shipyards, owners, designers.

One by one they rejected it, and in time it came to be known as "McDougall's Dream."

With all other possibilities exhausted, McDougall scraped up some money, hired odd labor, mostly stevedores, and built the first hull himself in 1888. Because of lack of funds, engines and boilers could not be installed, so he hired a tug, the *Record,* had the hull towed to Two Harbors where it was chartered for a cargo of iron ore to Cleveland. Twelve hundred tons of heavy red dirt went into that original pig's belly, and what was more, not even trimmed, so sure was her designer of her seaworthiness, even at the end of a towing hawser.

But *101*—that was the first pig's name—was jeered by shipping men the world over, despite her successful maiden voyage as a tow-barge. From "McDougall's Dream" it became "McDougall's Nightmare" and when later on she went ashore and was lost, the wise boys wagged their heads and said, "I told you so."

But to Alex McDougall that crazy engineless barge had proved her worth. Enthusiastically he tackled the job of financing another venture, and this time he steered clear of marine designers, scoffing shipmasters and owners. He went straight to New York, to Colgate Hoyt of the Rockefeller interests who had a lot of ore to move down the lakes, to say nothing of a budding oil industry.

God knows what McDougall told Hoyt, but whatever it was, the Rockefeller people underwrote the new undertaking by the formation of a shipbuilding company to build whaleback steamers. McDougall immediately began the construction of *102,* likewise a tow-barge. Followed *103, 104* and *105.* The Rockefellers were cautious, and after the hulls had been proven out would be time enough for expensive propulsion machinery. Then on June 9, 1890, the *Colgate Hoyt,* powered by compound engines, was launched at Duluth, the first self-propelled pig.

This vessel proved beyond a doubt everything McDougall claimed for the whaleback. Its fuel consumption was about half that of a standard rectangular-hulled vessel with the same carrying capacity. It was practically self-trimming because of its rounded hull, and its long deck, pierced with many hatches, made loading and unloading easier. With competition keen on the lakes other shipowners began to sit up and take notice, but John D.'s American Steel Barge Company had the design sewn up tight by patent after patent.

NOW comes one of the most daring events of Captain McDougall's life. While American shipping interests were satisfied that the whaleback steamer was worthy in every sense, the newspapers and shipping men of Great Britain continued to poke fun at it. Alex McDougall was irked, and he decided to show them, incidentally risking about a half-million dollars, not to mention some thirty lives, including his own, in the doing.

He decided to take the new whaleback, *C. W. Wetmore,* down to saltwater, down to the sea. This was nothing new. The Welland Canal and the locks on the St. Lawrence accommodated ships of two or three thousand tons under two hundred and sixty feet in length, which was

about the size of the average whaleback. But Alex thought he'd put on a real show, something that would forever still the ridicule of the British doubting Thomases.

Laden with wheat, the *Wetmore* sailed from Duluth June 10, 1891.

For many years small craft had run the St. Lawrence Rapids, but nobody in the wildest realms of imagination had ever dreamed of running them in a two-thousand-ton steamer. In fact it was a hazardous performance for small craft. Yet that was exactly what McDougall contemplated. The stresses put on the hull in that tumbling cauldron of waters would supply the answer to the question marine engineers had brought up again and again.

Docking at Kingston, McDougall made a thorough survey of the swift water in the river below. Almost a week passed before he returned, having made up his mind that it could be done, though river pilots told him that he was crazy and sure to lose both ship and crew.

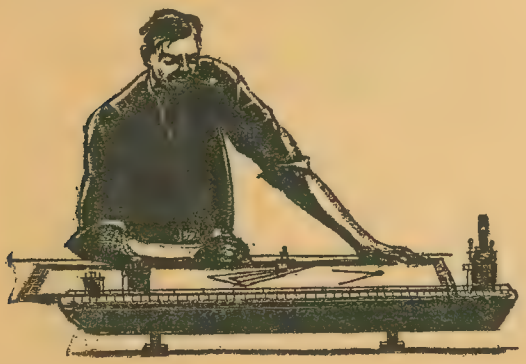
The gritty Scot lightered his cargo at Kingston and while this was being done, wired Colgate Hoyt at New York telling him of his intentions. Hoyt didn't answer. A successful running of the rapids would be a great piece of publicity for the ship-building company, and would result in a demand for whalebacks. But Hoyt wanted none of the responsibility if the attempt turned out disastrously. McDougall sent three telegrams, all of which remained unanswered, so it was up to him personally.

No pilot would take the vessel through, so Alex resolved to do it himself. He found an old river pilot who said it didn't make much difference if he drowned now or later. McDougall hired him, and take her through they did.

Afterward McDougall said, "There were places where it was like going over the side of a house; there were tremendous whirlpools where the least deviation would have meant death for all of us and the loss of the ship. But we came through without even marking the paint!"

Then, just to make the show more devastating, two more whalebacks that had accompanied the *Wetmore* to Kingston were run through the rapids under the personal command of McDougall. The only mishap was a dented bow plate on the third vessel.

The *Wetmore* was laden with wheat again at Montreal and McDougall was the last man out of the hold. His tracks in the wheat were plainly visible as the hatches were battened down. Then, with a God-speed from her designer, the *Wetmore* sailed for Liverpool where, despite her safe arrival, British shipping men and newspapers remained skeptical. There was one exception, however. William Johnston, a British shipowner with large interests, was present when the hatches were opened. He saw the footprints of Alexander McDougall in the wheat, footprints still undisturbed by the voyage because of the pig's easy-riding qualities. He swore that he was going to take the next steamer back to the States to see the man who made those tracks. He was as good as his word, visiting McDougall soon in Duluth.



For ten years McDougall experimented, keeping himself broke most of the time paying for the models with which his home was cluttered.

Under the heading THE NEW AMERICAN CARGO BOAT, the Liverpool *Mercury* of July 23, 1891, said—

> A great deal of interest has been created in the *C. W. Wetmore,* an American whaleback steamer, of which a full description was given in these columns yesterday. But we have some doubts, and so have the Marine Underwriters. . . if a large wave should strike the after superstructure it would lift it off and sweep the steering gear, lifeboats and half the crew away. It would also leave the machinery exposed and render the vessel helpless as a log. . . . . consequently Mr. M'Neill of the Underwriters informs us that the usual premium for the insurance of seagoing vessels is trebled in the case of the *Wetmore*. . .
>
> Yesterday the vessel was open for public inspection at the charge of one shilling, the funds so raised to be devoted to the Seamen's Orphanage. During the day over a thousand people visited her. . .
>
> The vessel has one advantage, that of quick discharge, in fact the fastest unloading we have ever seen.

Disregarding British conservatism, the *Wetmore* returned to New York and loaded a cargo of 2200 tons of general merchandise for Everett, Washington, which she carried around the Horn, arriving safe and sound.

Western enthusiasm soon made up for British skepticism. The new town on Puget Sound built a whaleback for itself, the *City of Everett*, launched October 25, 1894. This vesssel had a notable career, being the first American steamship to traverse the Suez Canal. In Cadiz, Spain, her captain was arrested because the Spanish harbor authorities could not imagine such an odd-appearing vessel belonging to any Christian nation. At least that was the excuse. Bad feelings between the United States and Spain over Cuba, then in seething revolt, were more probably the real cause.

For years this squat little tramp jogged the seven seas. She weathered the great Galveston hurricane without a scratch while every other ship caught in it either went down or suffered injury.

When the Bristish steamer *Adriatic* collided with a French liner off Nantucket the *Everett* came alongside in response to the *Adriatic's* distress signal. "I'll give you a tow to Boston," the *Everett's* skipper told the *Adriatic's* master.

"That damned pig couldn't tow a life-raft," was the liner captain's response. "Keep clear!"

Which high and mighty dignity cost him his ship. The weather got bad and the damaged *Adriatic* went down just as an American revenue cutter was trying to put a line aboard.

But up on the Great Lakes the whaleback caught on, and to a certain extent on saltwater. In Great Lakes yards alone thirty were built between 1888 and 1893, fourteen more were to be constructed later before rectangular ship construction caught up with the efficiency of the pig.

The crowning achievement of whaleback construction was the building of the *Christopher Columbus* (Berton Braley's Dirty Old Passenger Hog).

The city fathers and civic dignitaries of Chicago were planning for the World's Fair, not just an ordinary fair, but something that would knock 'em cold. What could be more effective than a huge whaleback steamer, since everybody was talking about whalebacks?

McDougall undertook to build this vessel from one of his models. The first plate, still warm from the rolling mill, accompanied by a brass band, was brought into the shipyard at Superior, Wisconsin, September 7, 1892. The hull was launched less than three months later and ten Pullman cars filled with World's Fair boosters flowed into the lakehead to see her take the water. It has been estimated that the *Columbus* carried 1,700,000 passengers on excursion cruises during the Fair.

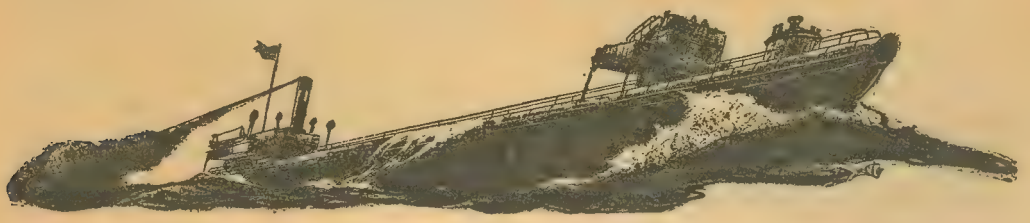
The Chicago *Tribune* of May 19, 1893 says—

> The *Christopher Columbus*, greatest steamer of all times, not even excepting the *Great Eastern*, arrived in Chicago yesterday. A greeting from hundreds of steamer whistles and the cheers of thousands of spectators met her. A salute of twelve guns from Fort Mackinaw hailed the passing monster. . .
>
> This whaleback has a capacity of 4,000 tons and will carry five thousand passengers. On its inaugural trip from Superior It carried 7,500. . .
>
> The *Columbus* is lavishly equipped. In its grand saloon are carpets of Wilton velvet, wainscoting and paneling in carved oak. . . there are statues, aquariums, paintings, etc. Baths, barbershops and restaurants have first-class fittings and give excellent service.

SO FAR all the comment, both pro and con about the whaleback has been from top sources, men who made or lost money on it, or the potential makers and losers of money. What about the men who sailed them?

Sailors didn't like the pig, in fact they hated it. And in good times pigmasters were always hard up for crews. No man would ship on a pig if he could help it. The quarters were cramped, ventilation was bad, and movement on the topside was very limited, more so in case of weather. It didn't take much weather before a pig's low deck was awash. So little by little a legend grew up about the pig, that it was a man-killer, that it would turn turtle easily, that it was an all-around eccentricity. That these stories had no basis in fact meant little or nothing. Not one Great Lakes sailor in a thousand will tell you that the old whaleback was a seaworthy ship.

She was built like a hog with flitches of steel,
In weather she'd do a jig,
And she carried the ore from West to East,
Did Alex McDougall's pig.



(Continued from page 6)

tant. Farm (mainly pigs), work in the logging woods all summer, write in the winter. The only job I ever failed at was selling, so either I have an inferiority complex or megalomania. Calling on farmers with the truck loaded with odds and ends wasn't selling, but a gossipy and friendly progress. I am married and happy in that state. I want to live a long time and be a good hillman. Born in Oregon, both parents Scots, I have an unquenchable faith in and love for America and Americans. I like dogs and know a man named Greenberry Beaver. I can rive shakes and pickets, make posts, call doodlebugs out of the ground, and cure my own pork—but so can my neighbor, a widow of sixty-five. I was left an orphan at twelve; a good thing, though I didn't think so at the time. I have not done very much writing, but I hope to do more—and better. I would rather fish or hunt than write, perhaps because I do both better. A novel "The Friends of Judas" has just been accepted for publication by Doubleday, Doran.

WHEN we'd finished reading Georges Surdez' "A Star on Bronze"—page 30, this issue—we were extremely curious to know how much of it was fact; how much a fiction-writer's fancy. We'd known several people who, after World War I, found themselves homeless, dispossessed, even nationless, the countries in which they had been born having vanished with the remaking of the map of Europe. They traveled on the so-called "Nansen passports" issued by the League of Nations which permitted these "men without a country" to establish a new identity. Some of them had had incidents in their backgrounds which paralleled in part the wanderings of Jacques-Louis Bertheau and none of the difficulties thrust on that hapless guy by the author seemed far-fetched to us. So we were not too surprised when Mr. Surdez wrote, in answer to our query—

Some years ago, in a small garrison town of the Oranese South, I met a Legionnaire who came from the region of France where I had spent part of my boyhood. He did not come within my sphere, as I was seeking colorful, adventurous characters, men with exciting stories, and I classified him at once as "a Legionnaire by accident." For he was over forty and looked it, and had entered the Corps but two years before. I guessed his story, too: He must have enlisted on impulse, as a gesture, because he had been humiliated by failure in business or the infidelity of his wife. Even in uniform, he looked like a farmer and he spoke slowly with the drawling accent of his rural district. Nevertheless, I took a great liking to him, perhaps because his talk of home evoked a nostalgic pleasure.

My first surprise was to discover that he spoke German, and even I could note that it wasn't the broken German picked up in the Legion. He explained that he had been a prisoner of war in Germany for some time. There was nothing remarkable in that, as several hundred thousand Frenchmen had been captured by the Germans between 1914 and 1918.

Some nights later, I participated in what may be called an informal banquet, with a group of Russians, very picturesque chaps, once officers and nobles, now Legionnaires and drivers for the Transsaharan Company. Jacques, the former Legionnaire, entered the bar, saw me and waved. I felt very tolerant and democratic at that moment, insisted upon his sitting down at my side and having a few drinks. He was a nice fellow, a home boy, and it was not his fault that he was not distinguished and had led such a humdrum existence!

He sat there, silent and reserved, perhaps embarrassed, for a long time, but he was doing very well on the brandy. When the singing started—Russians sing when they are hungry, when they have eaten well, when they're happy and when they're sad, but really loudly when they've had a few bottles—when the singing started, Jacques the Legionnaire suddenly joined in, and not merely to howl the tune, as I did, but with all the words, with all the ritual gestures, all the explosive and clicking sounds! My plain, middle-aged peasant had turned Cossack on me!

He chatted in Russian, in German, in dialects, he had a good voice and a fine memory, he could drink brandy as well as any Russian and could drink it longer, too—he turned out to be the sensation of that festive, memorable evening.

I was nettled and reproached him later for being secretive. How did he happen to know Russian and dialects, why hadn't he told me? He replied that I had never asked him and why shouldn't he speak Russian—seeing he'd lived in Siberia so many years? What was he doing in Siberia, I wanted to know? He said he'd been a prisoner of war. I asked him with some irritation if the Russians had held French prisoners of war in Siberia? Oh, no, Jacques the Legionnaire informed me, he'd been a German prisoner of war when in Russia.

I pieced his story together bit by bit, and it was hard to do. When sober, he did not consider his experiences interesting, and he had an annoying habit—he dragged in long details about potato soups, the French, the German, the Russian, and comparisons of soils, of wheats, Canadian, Russian, French etc. He would become somewhat more fluent on brandy, but he had been reared *on eau de vie de prunes* and by the time he was mellow enough to talk, I no longer heard very clearly.

However, he was eloquent on two topics:

The dreadful depression of the French troops after the licking at Charleroi in August, 1914 and the fact that his name was on a war monument—as dead. As he told me, he had tried to take it off and that had got him into serious trouble.

There was something heart-breaking yet sardonic in his story, and it kept coming back to mind every so often, year after year. But there was no satisfactory end to it, I felt, unless somehow Jacques the Legionnaire had his name taken off the memorial tablet. Even in fiction, messing around with a war memorial was in poor taste. It just was not done. Yet how compensate Jacques, make him happy, unless that name was off? I thought of an earthquake, but they are rare in France and not especially selective—an earthquake severe enough to shatter the monument would level the whole town. I thought of swiping a notion from Longfellow—having the lightning strike the tablet, fuse the particular name into a solid, ornamental bar—or into a series of exclamation points or asterisks. My better self and native caution prevailed and I did not try that.

Then someone told me a yarn about the departure of German troops from a small town toward the end of World War II, and the vandalism of the brutes—the last tank out had blasted the war memorial in a sort of parting salute. And, naturally, I thought, Jacques would be one guy who'd get a laugh out of that—and so I wrote the story at last.

GORDON MacCREAGH adds the following interesting footnote to his "Potent Paint" which appears on page 62 this month—

Erudite guys, such as ethnologists, have written pamphlets about the universal potency of a good paint job to do a killing up in style—*e.g.* our own Indians. The pamphlets rest in museum archives where nobody reads them. Me, I think they'd make better reading for *Camp-Fire* than this my screed that here reveals the basis of truth on which all good fiction must be built—at all events, fiction as good as *Adventure* prints. *(Thanks for the commercial!—Ed.)*

We were in Gallaland, Africa, my wife and I. The Gallas are a fine fighting tribe that the Ethiopians like to say they've conquered; only the Gallas don't know about it yet and Ethiopians who go amongst them take a strong guard along. We were building the thorn boma for the night—and I'm reminded that we were as mad as hyenas because our Somali cook had just used up a whole can of the wife's cold cream to fry the gazelle chops and he complained that this was a lousy sort of cooking grease because it didn't melt properly, but fizzled out to nothing in the pan. That was why he had had to use the whole can.

And so to the tale—appropriate, too; for it happened around our own camp-fire.

While the slaves toiled about the piling of the thorn fence—honest to God slaves, too, hired from a Galla chief for a pillboxful of a German-made trade item called "jochimbin" that made any old chief feel as frisky as a young leopard. We always carried it; for in Africa there's no labor so good as that of the properly trained slaves of some chief—and there is more of such here and there in Africa than official white papers ever admit.

So there we were, steeped in our sinful condonement of such doin's, when to our camp-fire came a Galla maiden. A comely, laughing thing; and we, democratic, though employers of slave labor, invited her to come and set a spell and chatter the local *habari*, the gossip of this'n'that. Most valuable is *habari*, for it tells you where game is and how are the water holes and who, maybe, has blood in his eye and where, so you can go somewhere else.

So this lassie told us about a lad who had blood in his eye. Her lover, no less; and he was out to kill a man. He had to kill a man because he wanted to marry her and in order to make the marriage a worthy one he had, of course, to prove up on his claim that he was now a man and a warrior. Usually anybody would do for the killing. The ordinary boys who didn't have much ambition would go get themselves a Gouragi from the foothill tribes; the same people as our chief's slaves. But her boy friend was something special; the most wonderful boy in the world and he loved her more than anybody had ever loved anybody in the world—this gentle maiden was in her teens and she was just like any other teen-ager. And she knew pretty near as much as most teen-agers. She knew that the white women had a wonderful kind of war paint that didn't wash off like the *junju* berry juice that the other boys used. How did she know? Because some missionaries with their women had passed by that way a year or so back—and what missionary women were doing with war paint, *I* don't know. But the laughing lassie was sure that my wife must have some of this war paint and, being very much in love, she came to beg a little of it and she brought a lovely woven basket as a gift in exchange for it.

And true enough, my wife had some lipstick somewhere in the duffel; though, being no missionary, she wasn't using it in the waste lands of Africa. So she dug it out; and the maiden squealed with joy and said that, with a war paint as top-grade as that, her boy friend would pay a cow to a good wizard to do him up with the very latest in mystic designs and he would be able to go and get him—not a mere Gouragi; perhaps even an Ethiopian.

We didn't know whether we should altogether believe the yarn whole or whether this teen-ager was pulling a fast one to

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ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

THE toemen of the bowmen.

Query:—What can you tell me about the bows which the Turkish bowmen bent with their feet and which were supposed to shoot arrows four hundred yards? Were they used by the infantry or cavalry—Janizaries or Spahis—and if by both did the weapons differ in size, shape or material?

—Len Powell,
Sparks Hill, Ill.

Reply by Earl B. Powell:—The Turkish bows which you mention were made of horn glued on a backing of wood and then there was a sinew backing laid on the back of the wood.

They were not very long—I doubt if any of them was over 4 feet—but they could stand the draw of a long arrow. Both foot and horse soldiers were equipped with them.

While they were of longer range than the old Welsh longbow, they were not so effective in battle owing to the fact that their arrows were so light. When they came in contact with the Tartars, the heavier Tartar arrows shot from the same type bows as the Turks used, were more effective.

The Welsh (not English) longbow used an arrow which was around 30 inches in the shaft with a head around six inches long. It was the development of this weapon that enabled the Welsh to maintain their independence as a nation for nearly 900 years.

TO FILE and set and swage a mill saw.

Query:—Can you tell me how to file and set a mill saw? Also the lead a saw should have? And the best way to saw a log to get the most out of it?

—H. L. Thompson,
Cook, Minnesota.

Reply by Hapsburg Liebe:—So you want to know "how to file and set a mill saw." I take it that you mean a circular log saw. We never spoke of "set" in a saw of this kind; always called it "swage." "Set" was a term for smaller round saws that had one tooth-point bent or hammered out of line one way, the next tooth-point bent or hammered out of line the other way, and so on. "Briar tooth" is the old name for that.

Swage means spreading the tooth points so that in cutting they will clear the main body of the saw and prevent ruinous heat from friction. The usual way to do this spreading is by means of a little tool 4 or 5 inches long called an "upset," or "jumper," and a hammer. You must have seen an "upset" if you have been much around circular-saw mills. Most modern circular mills, however, use saws with inserted teeth. When these wear out they are discarded and new ones put in. To swage inserted teeth, take them out of the saw and put them in a strong vise. Swaging them in the saw will do more or less damage to the sockets.

Also you asked about "lead." If saw and stock are exactly in line, up-coming teeth behind will scratch the stock and make it twice as rough. So the front edge of the saw should be turned *very slightly into the log,* just enough so that the teeth behind will clear. If even this small "lead" causes the saw to pull *into* the log, file the teeth half a fine hair less on the board side (not the log side).

Filing is simple. Use a sharp file. Do most of the filing on the face of the tooth, only a little on top, and be sure you keep the original pitch, or "hook," in the tooth; don't "dub" the points off thick (you can't swage them when they're thick). If you use a solid-tooth saw, keep the throats "gummed" out with an emery wheel to make sawdust room.

How to cut a log to get the most out of it? If the log is crooked, or knotty, each log is its own problem. If no knots and a straight log, simply saw it to a square, then saw up the square, edging the boards that have bark edges. I'm taking it for granted that you are sawing boards. If it is timbers, then that too is its own problem.

Each circular log saw cuts better at one certain particular speed, depending upon how "loose" the central parts are. A little

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THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, financial backing or employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

Notice: Many of our *Ask Adventure* experts are still engaged in government service of one kind or another. Some are on active duty in the Army or Navy, others serving in an executive or advisory capacity on various of the boards and offices which were set up to hasten the nation's war effort. Almost without exception these men consented to remain on our staff, carry on their work for the magazine if humanly possible, but with the understanding that for the duration such work was to be of secondary importance to their official duties. This was as it should be, and when you didn't receive answers to queries as promptly as we all wished, your patience was appreciated. Foreign mails are still slow and uncertain, many are still curtailed drastically, but now that the war is over we can hope for a more expanded, smoother functioning *Ask Adventure* service very soon. Bear with us and we'll continue to try to serve you as speedily as possible.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Boxing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing: *Paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 1325 So. Main St., Princeton, Ill.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—FREEMAN LLOYD, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure.*

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *Fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

Fly and Bait Casting Tournament—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Health-Building Activities. Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, care of *Adventure.*

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6520 Romaine St., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *Foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns, American and Foreign: Wing Shooting and Field Trials—ROY S. TINNEY, care of *Adventure.*

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Swords, Spears, Pole Arms and Armor—MAJOR R. E. GARDNER, care of *Adventure.*

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 6720 Jeffery Ave., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America. Outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure*.

Ornithology: *Birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 5 Minerva Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, care of *Adventure*.

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*.

Sunken Treasure: Treasure ships; deep-sea diving; *salvage operations and equipment*—LIEUTENANT HARRY E. RIESEBERG, care of *Adventure*.

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 156 Joralemon St., Belleville, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure*.

The Merchant Marine—GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure*.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, King Edward High School, Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure*.

U. S. Marine Corps—LIEUT. COL. F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure*.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure*.

★**New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley N. S. W., Australia.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya—GORDON MACCREAGH, 2231 W. Harbor Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans* — CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **4** *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure*. **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits, Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDEL, care of *Adventure*. **4** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **5** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Europe, Part 1—*Denmark, Germany, Scandinavia*—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure*.

Central America—ROBERT SPIERS: BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure*.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure*.

★**West Indies**—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Iceland—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure*.

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure*.

Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, care of *Adventure*.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan Campeche*—CAPTAIN W. RUSSELL SHEETS, care of *Adventure*.

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. **3** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate*, Trenton Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks Camping*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 103 Wembly Rd. (Forest Hill), Toronto, Onto., Canada. **5** ★*Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **6** ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501—10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6520 Romaine St., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure*. **3** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **5** *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **6** *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, care of *Adventure*. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

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Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 40 Chapel St., Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **5** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C.; S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*. **6** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

The author of that startling story "Brother Holt and the Bull Gorilla" which we published last month takes us sailing to the China Sea on an opium clipper in the December issue. In a stirring long novelette—

"THE BLACK STUFF"

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

—you'll ship aboard the *Hannah* out of Boston, Jasper Green commanding, with a crew of Lascars to sail her, a missionary and his daughter for passengers, a Eurasian *comprador* to stir up trouble, and chest on chest of the best Malwa poppy-powder worth a fortune in Sycee silver in the hold. Pirates and a typhoon, are only minor ingredients that help to make this yarn a story to remember.

The second gripping instalment of Alfred Powers' smashing new serial, "Chains for Columbus"—in which Francisco Perez encounters the Black Death and ships with the Admiral of the Ocean Sea on his fourth and final voyage to the New World . . . . "The Testimony of Singletrack Simpson" by Hector Chevigny—being a hilarious transcript of the star witness's story of the murder that kept Okanomak County, Washington in stitches for three sweltering days . . . . "Gone Injun" by Nard Jones, which takes us steamboating in a stern-wheeler on the Columbia River just after the turn of the century with a squawman pilot who couldn't make up his mind whether to wreck the craft or not . . . . "The Aceing of Field Marshall Cluff" by James Atlee Phillips, in which you'll meet the only transport pilot who rates being called an ace. The fact that the five planes he brought down were all his own really have nothing to do with the story . . . . "Pigeon Blood" by E. Hoffman Price, a stirring novelette of the Burmese ruby mines under post-war reconstruction conditions . . . . A fine fact story by John Richard Young, "El Gaucho"—which gives a vivid and colorful picture of the habits, life, character and adventures of the fast-vanishing pampas cowboy . . . . Plus a wealth of short stories, verse, departments and features such as you can find each month only in—

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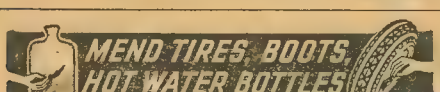

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Saves rubber. Easy to use—just spread on, let dry. Millions sold! Complete Kit, enough for 20 average repairs, 29c. At Hardware or 10c Stores.

Millions Save with So-Lo Menders

(Continued from page 69)

about it; she understood, of course, as you will too, that to Janie, in her desperate need, the saving of her man was all that mattered, and let the rest of the world look to itself.

It remains a source of gratification to me that my destiny may be diverted, but not changed. I do not know just how well Mopo might have succeeded at stalking this redheaded major, for—as happens to men who own princely jewels—my value proved to be too great for his handling.

My fame had spread, of course, and I was as much an object of fierce desire as any jewel. Amongst those who lusted to prove their prowess to their woman was a young stalwart named Kafuru, who lived in a neighboring village. Kafuru came over to M'Buni, but he did not sordidly murder Mopo, as white men do for jewels. He told him, "Boy who would be a warrior, I will fight you for this white man who has the special virtue of hair the color of blood."

And so my Mopo's hand was forced. For amongst these Tchad cowmen a man may quite decently be too proud to work—but he may not be too proud to fight.

The affair was arranged in the village market square and the aloof American boys never knew what was going on, though they would had given their eyeteeth for snapshots to send home. Mopo put up a brave enough but a rather stupid fight for me. He fell into the error of a big shield and a heavy spear. The other man, Kafuru, laughed at him.

"A small shield and a light spear and a quick foot," he cried, expounding the modern military technique of mobility.

Mopo's tactic was heavy, solid—almost Teutonic, one might say. He charged at Kafuru in furious rushes, hoping to crush him with the first onslaught of sheer weighty equipment. Kafuru reeled under the smash of the big shield onto his lighter one, and Mopo drove in a thrust that might have ended it then and there. But Kafuru managed to sway his belly away and took a gash that ripped down his thigh from waist to knee. He bled appallingly. But he recovered his balance and came back at Mopo with a series of fast-stepping thrusts round the edge of that solid bulwark of shield.

Those Yank boys would have loved to see Kafuru fight. As a matter of fact, he fought a good deal like themselves. Although wounded, his courage was superb and he fought with his head—he could think. And he laughed at Mopo as he fought.

One of his fast stabs flicked round the edge of the defense that Mopo had thought to be impregnable, and nicked Mopo's side. Mopo screamed hoarse rage at the insult to his might and flung his whole weight at Kafuru. The rush beat Kafuru to one knee, and I thought that was the end. Which, as a matter of fact,

it was—but not as I and the onlooking world thought.

This was where Kafuru showed his faculty of thinking in the midst of catastrophe. He drew his other knee up under him and jumped. Magnificently. Up over the edge of Mopo's shield—went over the top, as you might say—and down behind the impregnable defense. His spear, with his whole weight behind it, took Mopo just over the collar bone and drove down the whole length of his body. Mopo fell stiffly, impaled, unable to do more than draw his knees up and kick spasmodically—once.

Even the men of M'Buni acknowledged that Kafuru put up a splendid fight. Of course, I was formally turned over to him and he immediately made arrangements with the witch doctor to get himself painted up in the manner that demanded a ceremonial trophy no less rare than a white man with red hair.

I am now tingling with suspense. This Kafuru is a brainy lad and has courage and initiative. We may go far together—until the fate that rides with my possession overtakes him.

I know my power now, and that my destiny is blood-red with strong desire that means life and death. I feel that I am but at the beginning of a career as exciting as some of the more deadly diamonds. A redheaded major, eh? A trophy indeed for my prowess! I wonder. I, too, am watching events like a lion that is sure of a kill.

THE END

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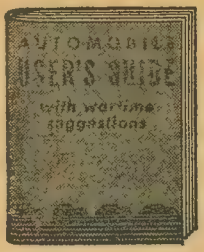

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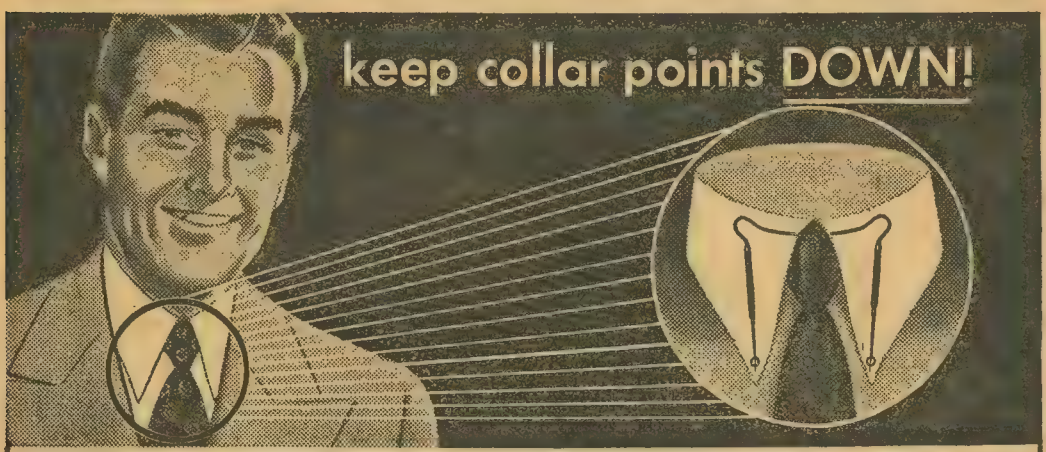

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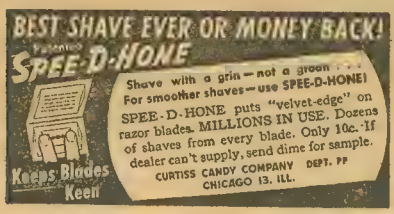
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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Francis E. Northrope, Monico, Wisconsin wishes information about his brother Melvin H. Northrope, last heard of driving a bus out of Hastings, Neb. He served four years in Canadian Army and is twenty-four years old, 5 ft. 6 in. tall, weighs 100-110 lbs., blue eyes, ruddy complexion, dark brown hair. His brother is too young to handle horses and needs help running the farm.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Wilfred E. Schmaultz, born and raised in Chicago, Ill., last heard of residing at 84 Jackson St., San Francisco, Calif., please notify M. H. House, Box M. c/o Atlantic Refining Co., Meeteetse, Wyoming. He probably shipped in the Merchant Marine in Oct. '44.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of John Andrew Lannan born at Summerville, P.E.I., last heard of at City Island, New York about fifteen years ago, was then engaged in ship building business and is believed to have moved to the State of Connecticut. Age about 64 years. Please communicate with his sister, Mrs. Hugh D. McClelland, St. Peter's Bay, Prince Edward Island.

I would like to hear from Albert "Shorty" Armstrong, and "Butsy" Butterfield, who were members of the 13th U.S. Infantry Band in 1924 at Fort Warren, Mass. Also Philip Smith, Jr., who lived on [illegible] borough St., Boston in 1941. I have recently been discharged from Army Air Force and would like to hear from some of the old buddies of the old band. John J. Delaney, 227 Broadway, Cambridge 39, Mass.

August 22, 1945

Gentlemen:—

I have located the persons for whom you so kindly advertised in your Lost Trails *department. I thank you very much indeed.*

Sincerely,

—John J. Delaney
227 Broadway,
Cambridge, 39, Mass.

(Continued from page 137)

garner herself a tube of lipstick and knock all the other girls for a jealous loop; and anyway, who were we to start reforming the traditions of a fighting people? That was what the missionaries collected our pennies for. And anyway, it was a lovely basket. So we gave her the lipstick and she whooped—and, her cares gone with the wind, she ate damn near a whole side of gazelle chops.

We went our ways and forgot the gentle young thing. And time went along and hung this denouement on our consciences: Trekking back there or thereabouts—actually about fifty miles from there—who should come to our camp-fire but our laughing lassie! The *habari* had come to her that we were passing that fifty miles away—and *you* tell me how it had carried without telephone or rural free delivery—and she brought along a stalwart young warrior to introduce him and let him say thank-you in person. And bedamned if he hadn't done it and married her!

Done it with éclat and for the acclamation of his whole village. An Ethiopian! He squatted across the fire and told us the whole triumphant details with each move acted out; how he had located his man and tracked him for two days and everything. He took half the night to act it and beat his chest and shout his battle cries, while the gentle maiden drank it in for the hundredth time and cooed.

Half a night's acting is too long to repeat over your and my *Camp-Fire*.

The deflating payoff is that my wife now keeps waste paper and broken hairpins and feminine trash in the blood-weighted gift basket.

WE regret having to postpone publication of Hector Chevigny's "The Testimony of Singletrack Simpson" which was announced in last month's *Trail Ahead*. George Wert, the artist who was commissioned to illustrate the story, was flooded out of his Virginia farm by torrential rains early in August—bridges down, roads blocked—and unable to get to the post office to mail his pictures in time to reach us before printer's deadline. They'll be here, however, in ample time to make next month's *Adventure*—come hell and high water!—he assures us so we'll hear from Singletrack in the December issue.—K.S.W.

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You know how people talk about the fellow with the "porcupine" hair. Be careful this never happens to you! Now it's so easy to keep your hair smartly and neatly well-groomed *all day long* with Glover's Imperial Hair Dress. Try the one-minute massage tomorrow morning with Glover's Hair Dress and see the difference in more *natural*-looking softness that makes you feel sure of yourself. NON-ALCOHOLIC to avoid scalp dryness . . . ANTISEPTIC for clean, *protected* scalp! Ask for Glover's at any Drug Store or Drug Counter—or mail the Coupon today!

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RAILROAD MAGAZINE

205 E. 42nd St., New York City 17

(Continued from page 138)

experimenting will show you the best speed for your saw. No secret about this. Only a matter of centrifugal force expanding the rim of the saw.

ON becoming a stamp dealer.

Query: How can I become a stamp dealer? Will I have to have a license and how much does a license cost?

—Bill Ruge,
Box 291,
Fairhope, Ala.

Reply by H. A. Davis:—You do not have to be licensed to deal in stamps.

There are two very important booklets on this subject which you should read before embarking in the stamp business. They are "The Dealer and His Stock," by Bill Bloss, published by Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News, Portland, Maine, and "How to Deal in Stamps," published by the same company. I think they cost about 15c each, but are worth a great many times that amount to one thinking of going in the stamp business.

BUFFALO guns of the Western plains

Query:—Can you set me straight as to the makes and caliber of side-arms and buffalo guns used on the great plains of the West during the period of 1830 to 1835.

What reference books I have available are vague. I have read somewhere of the Sharps .50-caliber buffalo gun used about that time. Were the guns of that period all muzzle loaders, or cap and ball or what?

—J. B. Young,
Ypsilanti, Mich.

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—The weapons used by the men on the plains and in the mountains in the period 1830-35, would be the big-bore muzzle-loading arms, rifles and pistols. By that time, the percussion-lock arms were in wide use, but still, I fancy, a good many men clung to the old flintlocks.

However, you may safely depend upon it, most of the men who killed buffalo, deer, and fought Indians, used the muzzle-loading rifle as their standby, as it was all that was available then, for the Colt revolving arms didn't show up till 1836, at the earliest, and I doubt if any got West before 1838, in the hands of Texas Rangers, under Captain Jack Hayes.

The majority of the plains rifles were single-barreled muzzle-loaders, as stated above but I have seen double-barrels, and own one of three three-barreled revolving rifles I have seen in the past thirty-five years.

The Sharps rifles seem to have been first used, as cap-and-cartridge breechloading carbines, in the Mexican War of 1846. They would appear to have been made first as metallic cartridge arms, during the Civil War, and the fifty calibers for use by the buffalo hunters, got here in the Seventies.

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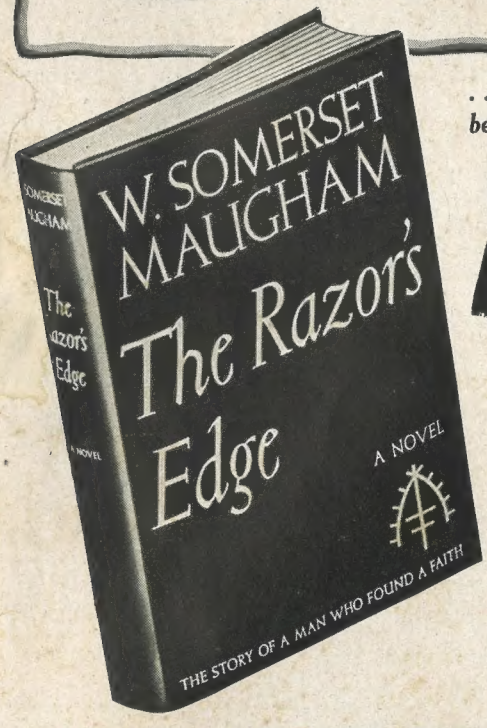

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